

The BATTLE of the FEARS





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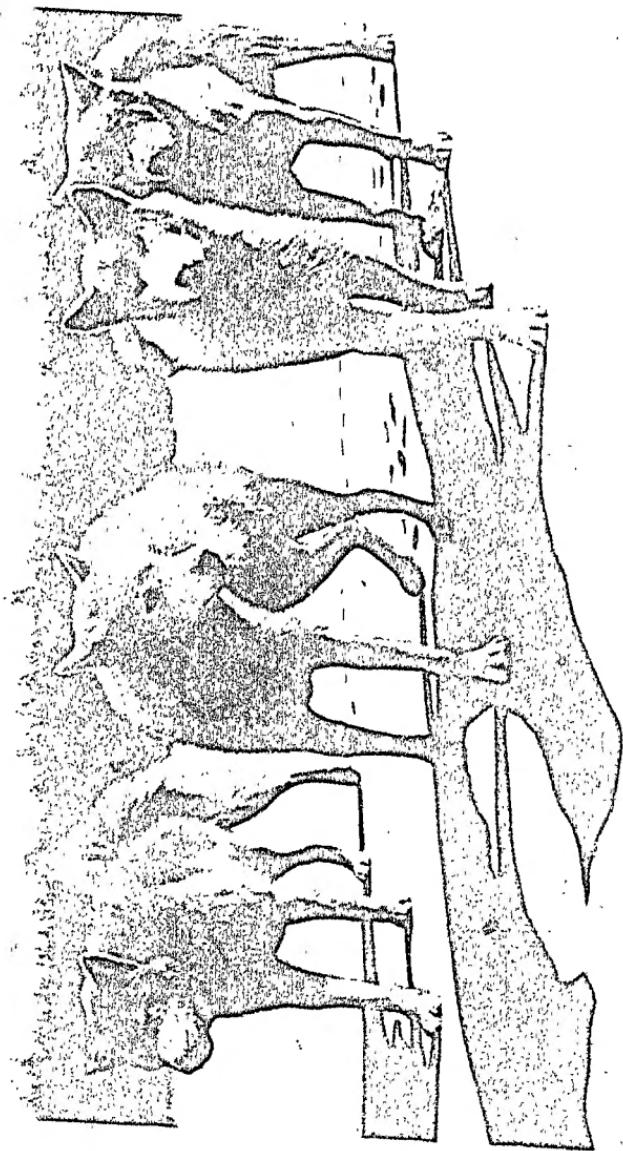
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THE BATTLE OF THE BEARS







OUR ESKIMO DOGS

The Battle of the Bears

Life in the North Land

BY

EGERTON R. YOUNG

Author of "Hector My Dog," "By Canoe and Dog Train," "My Dogs in the North Land," etc.

Illustrated by
the author's photographs and
pen and ink drawings



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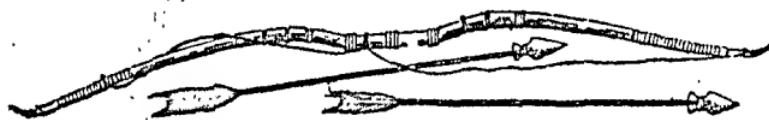
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THE BATTLE OF THE BEARS

INTRODUCTION

THE irresistible onward march of civilization into the remotest solitudes of the northern regions of this American continent, long vaguely known as the Hudson Bay territories, makes it necessary that what is done to retain a knowledge of the former days and the life lived in those wilderness places, must be done quickly. Soon the shriek of the steam-whistle will be heard where the howling of the wolves and the whoofs of the bears have been for ages almost the only startling sounds, while on many of the lakes and rivers, steamboats and yachts are already taking the place of the graceful canoe and the once indispensable dog train is being crowded still farther north.

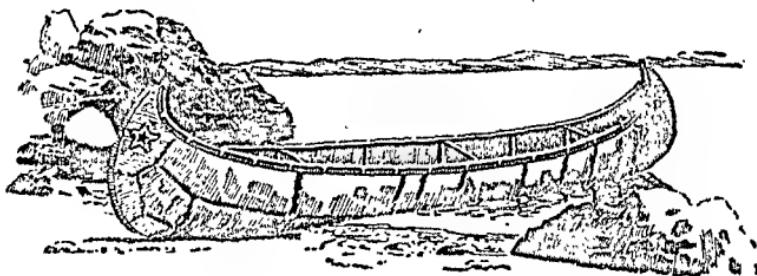
In this volume it has been a source of great pleasure to the author to gather up and put on record some of these unique scenes which will soon be of a past generation, and he hopes that they will also be of interest to many readers.



CONTENTS

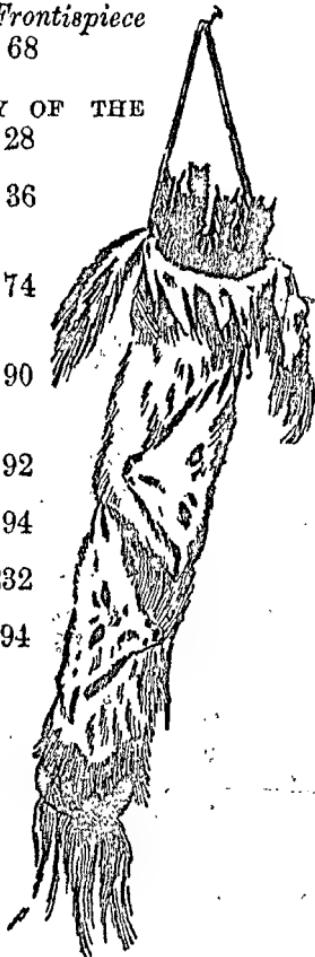
I. THE BATTLE OF THE BEARS	11
II. THE RACE FOR THE SHIRTS	25
III. THE CALL AND JOURNEY TO THE NORTH LAND	45
IV. INTRODUCING MY DOGS	61
V. DOG TRAVELLING IN THE NORTH LAND	69
VI. THE WINTER CAMP IN THE SNOW	83
VII. SHOEING THE DOGS	97
VIII. THE FAMOUS INDIAN GUIDES	115
IX. INDIAN BOYS AND GIRLS AT SCHOOL	129
X. THE OLD INDIAN IN THE INFANT CLASS	145
XI. A DINNER OF POTATOES VERSUS THREE SERMONS	155
XII. PLOUGHING WITH DOGS	171
XIII. THE BIRCH BARK CANOE	187
XIV. MY MOST EXCITING CANOE TRIP	201
XV. SOME INDIAN CHARACTERISTICS	217

XVI.	LIFE IN THE WIGWAMS	229
XVII.	SPLENDID AS WELL AS AMUSING PROGRESS	243
XVIII.	THE INDIAN HUNTER AS A COMRADE	255
XIX.	WHY I GAVE THE MARRIAGE FEAST	271
XX.	THE SIGN LANGUAGE AND PICTOGRAPHY	283
XXI.	INDIAN CREDULITY AND INCREDOULITY	301
XXII.	INDIAN HONESTY OR THE STORY OF KOOS-TAWIN	319
XXIII.	THE INDIAN'S FUTURE AND THE WHITE MAN'S DUTY	335



ILLUSTRATIONS

OUR ESKIMO DOGS	<i>Frontispiece</i>
	68
THE STORY OF THE DISCOVERY OF THE CACHED FISH	28
THE CHALLENGE	36
FEEDING THE DOGS DURING THE SUMMER	74
A DOG SLED AND A GOOD ROAD	90
RUNNING THE RAPIDS OF A NORTHERN RIVER	192
MAKING CAMP FOR THE NIGHT	194
INDIAN BUFFALO WIGWAMS .	232
STORIES IN PICTOGRAPHY .	294





CHAPTER ONE

The Battle of the Bears

Canoeing with the Indians. Signs of Bears. Clever fisherman. First sight of our bear. Method of approach. The family of bears. The terrible battle. The death. A new family arrangement.



I.

"**C**HIST! Oomah! Look there!"

Thus whispered Curleyhead in two languages.

My gazing had been in another direction and so before I could see what had excited my Indian canoemen, they had arrested the onward movement of our canoe and had paddled back behind a great rock.

"What is the matter now?" I asked, for from my lack of alertness or duller vision I had failed to observe anything unusual. But these keen-eyed hunters, whose very existence often depended upon their alertness, had caught the one glimpse for which they had been eagerly looking. It was that of a great black bear far ahead of us, sunning himself on the shore.

We had had signs of bear during the last two or three days. Not only were there numerous tracks on the sandy shores of the different lakes and rivers, but at several points where the white-fish, pike, mullets, goldeyes, and other fish are abundant in the waters, we found the flat rocks on which the bears seat themselves and from which with a good deal of skill and

cleverness, they succeed in throwing out of the water numbers of the finny tribe.

Bears are very fond of fish, but are more or less fastidious in eating them, according to the quantity they capture. When a bear goes fishing, he does not generally, unless ravenously hungry, at once eat the first fish he captures. If he thinks he has secured a spot where his sharp, keen eyes, even if they are small ones, tell him that fish are plentiful to-day, he patiently continues at his task sometimes for hours, until he has skilfully thrown a goodly number of them out on the shore. His preference among all, is the delicious whitefish. If at one trial he is fortunate enough to catch a number of them, he is so dainty in his tastes that he will bite out and eat only the rich, oily part of the fish, just back of the head. If he has not caught a sufficient number to furnish him with a hearty meal on those favorite parts, he then eats the next best portions.

If, as often happens, his fishing luck has been poor, and he has caught but few, he greedily devours them all, with perhaps the exception of a head or two, and may be some tails and bones.

Thus it is that the Indian hunters, as they find the various places where the bears have been fishing and then dining, can always tell

by the remains of the dinner what success they have had in their last fishing at that spot.

As I have mentioned, the watchful, experienced eyes of my Indians had detected several of these fishing rocks and dining-rooms of the bear, during our canoeing of the previous days, and so this early morning they were on the alert for the sight of the clever bears themselves. And now, sure enough, here was one of them, and a fine, handsome fellow he was, as, noiselessly gliding round the shoulder of the big rock, we surveyed him at our leisure. My telescope, which made my vision about equal to that of the Indians with their naked eyes, enabled me to see him perfectly, as, after his night's rest, he rolled himself about lazily in the sand, at that early morning hour, like a great black Newfoundland dog. He was evidently in good humor and not hungry, and my men said, as they watched him, that he must surely be the bear whose fishing rock we had found the previous evening not many miles in our rear. As a matter of precaution, bears do not generally sleep near where they have been fishing even if they have left there some fish that they could not devour at one meal.

They prefer their fish fresh, in the season, and have found out, too, that other fish-loving

animals, unable to supply their own wants, are apt to scent their prey. So, having satisfied themselves, and preferring peace to provision for future need, they generally go some distance away before they find a cozy spot where they cuddle down like a dog.

Contrary as it may seem to the impression of many, the black bear is naturally a peaceful animal, and does not generally begin a quarrel, unless he has some good reason for it. He is timid and alert and harder to approach than a deer. Meet him unexpectedly on a trail in the forest and he is as frightened as you are, and unless he is provoked by your wounding him, for he is very quick tempered, or encouraged by a great display of cowardice on your part, you will find him delighted with any reasonable excuse for retiring from your presence with all the alertness possible consistent with his ideas of safety.

For some time we watched the bear's antics, as he rolled himself about in the warm sand and then by way of variation sat up on his haunches, and with his fore paws struck at the deer-flies and similar pests, that worried him. Lest we should be discovered, or our presence even suspected by him, we again drew back behind the rock. There my men discussed the best means

for his capture. I mildly protested against the delay, saying that a half day at least would be lost, and urging the fact that game more agreeable to our taste than bear's meat had been so abundant that our canoe was well filled with the choicest of meat. I added that even if they did succeed in killing him, his skin would not be nearly so valuable now as it would be some months hence in the colder weather.

When my words and requests were emphatic, they were always listened to by my Indians, and promptly carried out. But to-day they seemed to lack the snap which always brought prompt compliance and these men, quick to read me, said, with the merest twinkle of the eye :

“Ookemou (master), wish to go on, or see a bear hunt?” When there is a disposition to surrender, we are easily conquered. I capitulated and said, “Well, show me a first-class one, and be quick about it.”

The first thing they did was to withdraw the charges of duck shot from their guns and reload them with bullets. Their flint guns will throw a ball about a hundred yards, as well as an ordinary rifle. My Martini-Henry rifle was charged with a fresh cartridge, while my men gave a quick glance at their sheath knives to

see that they were in perfect condition, for in a bear fight no one knows what may happen.

The next thing now was to get near that bear. This was no easy matter. Such was the nature of the muskegs, or swamp, behind him that there was no possibility of getting at him, in the rear. There was, however, a small rocky island not more than sixty or seventy yards from the sandy beach on which he was now resting. The Indians, knowing the restless nature of bears, said that it was hardly likely he would remain here very long, but they would try, anyway, a scheme that might possibly work. We began at once to carry it out.

We paddled back a little farther up the river and then quietly landed on the shore, on the opposite side of the river. From the place where we landed we made a portage, by carrying our canoe and its contents along in the forest, parallel to the river, but well out of sight and scent of the bear. When directly opposite that little island, which was now between us and him, we noiselessly launched and loaded our canoe, and quietly paddled across the river.

Hardly had we landed and secured our canoe and taken possession of our guns, before we heard the angry "Woof! Woof!" of the bear. Thinking that in some way or other, he had got

knowledge of us, we crouched flat on the ground. My Indians were surprised and perplexed. The wind was dead in our faces, so he had not got any scent of us, and they were sure they had made no noise that could have been heard. We lay low and waited.—But we had not long to wait. The “Woof! Woofs!” were repeated again and again, so Curleyhead, our most experienced bear hunter, quietly crawled forward to see what was the matter.

As the ominous sounds continued we waited with some impatience for his return. The gleam of the hunter was in his eye, when noiseless, like a snake, he crawled between us and reported what he had seen. His story was that the bear was still about where he had first observed him on the sand, and that coming slowly towards him was a family of black bears, consisting of the father and mother and a couple of cubs, about four or five months old. It was evident by the way the two male bears were snarling at each other that they were enemies; perhaps had been rivals, and anyway a big fight would doubtless soon take place. He added, from his experience of bears’ battles, that as they were now so wild at each other they would not be so alert in watching against other enemies.

“We can carefully get higher up among the

rocks and see the battle, and then fire when we think best. But," he added, "be very careful, for that old mother bear may act as sentinel and discover us, if we give her a chance."

Strange, is it not, how some things excite us! Do what I would, I could not keep my heart from loud thumping or my breath from coming fast and hard. Christian or heathen, what is it in us, that at the prospect of such a fight, throws us into such agitation! It was not any idea of danger, for here on this island, heavily armed, we were absolutely safe. If those bears got one sight or scent of us, they would rush away as speedily as the most timid deer. Yet here I was, strung up with this almost uncontrollable excitement, as, holding on to my rifle, I carefully crawled along under cover of the rocks ahead. We reached our points of observation before the battle began.

It was evident, Curleyhead whispered to me, that they were old fighters who had met before, as, like experienced gladiators, each seemed to wait for an unguarded moment on the part of the other.

In the meantime the mother bear had settled down on her haunches on the sand, in utter indifference to the fight. When either of her cubs, as they frolicked and wrestled with each other,

happened to come near her, she seemed to delight to give it a cuff that tumbled it over in the sand.

Warily moving around on their hind legs, the two great bears kept up their growlings, evidently getting more angry and exasperated with each other, but each loth to begin the conflict. Curleyhead, as we called him, but whose right name was Mache-que-quo-nape, was crouched close beside me, and a quiet laugh from him almost startled me, while he whispered :

“ Those old bears are just jawing each other. They both wanted the same wife. They had a big fight once before about her, and as one bear, in the fight, got a bad bite that made him lame, the other fellow ran off with her. We Indians,” added Curleyhead, “ say that the bear, because his paw is so like the hand, has a little human in him; and so there those two bears are scrapping just like two men about a woman.” And again he chuckled quietly to himself, for he had had his own troubles.

I know not how much more of this quaint Indian lore I should have heard if it had not been abruptly brought to a close, for now the two bears suddenly sprang at each other, and were locked in the terrible embraces of their great muscular arms. It was an awful struggle, and

even my seasoned Indians could not keep from being intensely excited. Standing on their hind feet, and wary, the bears struggled in the greatest wrestling match imaginable. The grip they had on each other was what the boys call a "back hold," and of equal advantage, as each bear had one fore arm under, and the other over his opponent. As they put forth their enormous strength, it did not seem to us that their efforts were so much directed to the attempt to down each other as to try to squeeze out the very life. The power of the hug of a bear has enlivened and electrified many a yarn, and has, in reality, to many a poor hunter been his death or nearly so. And now to watch two great muscular, full-grown bears, full of jealous hate, practicing these hugs on each other,—well it was a sight but seldom seen.

Strange to say, up to this time they had not used their teeth much. Both seemed to hope that the hug trick would do its work. But as, carefully balancing themselves on their hind feet which they kept wide apart, they continued the desperate struggle, both seemed to realize that some other method of fighting was necessary, and in addition they were horribly enraged. So in a short time they began vigorously to tear with their teeth at each other's

head and neck, as well as they could without for a moment letting go their grip.

Tough as bearskin is, it could not stand this very long, and so the end came suddenly. All at once we noticed that the great fore arms of the father bear fell limp by his sides and then he quickly sank on the sands. The other bear, loosening his grip, watchfully stood over him as though suspecting a trick, but as there was no movement beyond some convulsive jerkings he drew back a yard or two and watched him to his death. Then he moved away to the female bear and her cubs. A little conversation, and some mutual explanation, doubtless took place, and then they began moving away.

My Indians wanted to fire at them, but I positively forbade them. "Fire your guns to hurry them off, but do not hit them," I said, and raising my own rifle I started the music by sending my bullet close enough to make the sand fly near them. The Indians also fired, and away sped a newly organized or reorganized bear family.

We hurried back to our canoe, and when we reached the dead bear we found that his opponent with his sharp teeth had cut through his jugular vein. So he had bled until exhausted, and thus fell on the sand as we saw him.



43



CHAPTER TWO

The Race for the Shirts

Securing supplies with dogs. Three heavy trains given three days' start. A stern chase and a long one. Pictographic signs. Clever and shrewd Indians. Thievish wolves. Rapid travelling. The smoke signal. The signs on the rock. A close race. New shirts for all.

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II

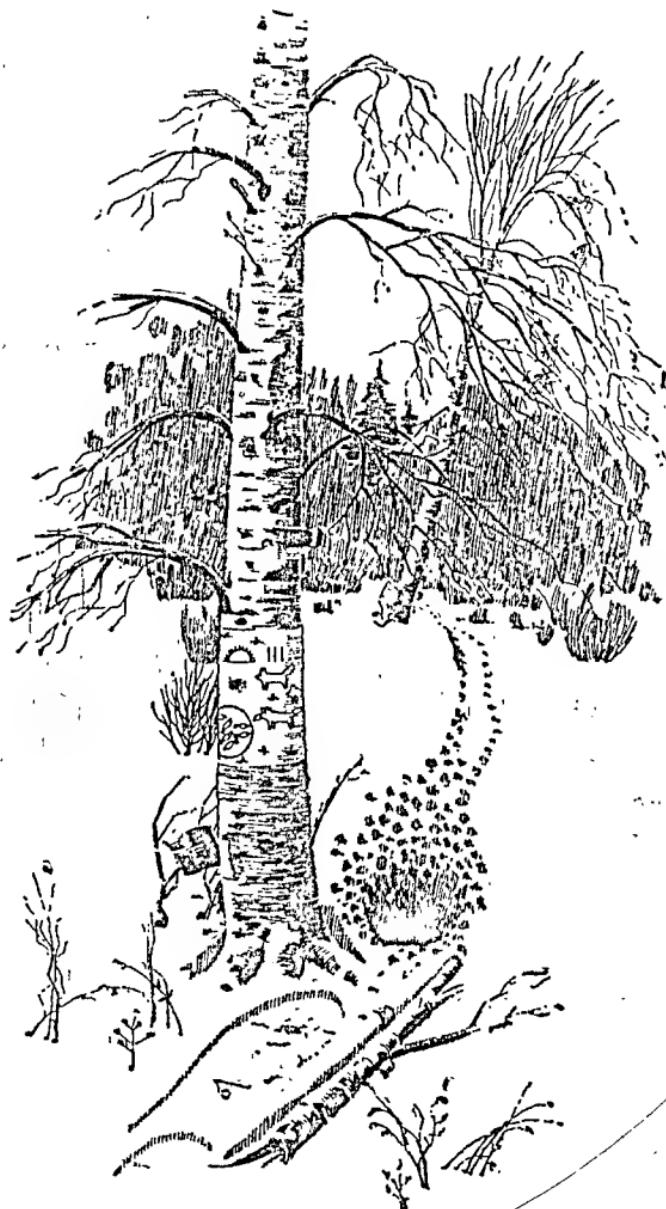
ONE winter, having a large number of dogs and being very short of food in our northern home, I took with me five trains of dogs and went into what was then known as the Red River Settlement for supplies. When the loads were secured, I sent on ahead the three sleds that were most heavily loaded and remained behind to attend to some business matters keeping with me the two swiftest dog trains and much lighter loads.

In sending on ahead the three Indian dog drivers with their heavy loads, we told them that we would travel very rapidly and hoped to overtake them before they reached home. We gave them orders to leave plenty of pictographic signs of their progress, especially to let us know if the weather kept fine and of their location each day at midday. These signs, when discovered by my men, as we rapidly followed, would be of interest to us, as they would tell us how much we were gaining on the trains ahead. At the camps made each night they were to leave fuller pictographic signs, giving us any information needed. These, however, we did not always

see, as we travelled so much faster than they did. At the end of our second day, having gained one day on them, we reached the camp where they had spent their third night. Here we found an elaborate account made in pictography on a birch tree (as shown in drawing I) telling us that their supply of fish, which had been cached here on the down trip, had been discovered and devoured by wolves or wolverines. To their regret they had been obliged to feed the dogs out of the meat supplies which were being carried out for the mission.

As their camp had not been spoiled by any storm or blizzard we at once took possession of it. All we had to do was to cut a fresh supply of wood and kindle up the camp-fire, feed our dogs, prepare our own suppers, say our prayers and roll ourselves up in camp-beds and go to sleep. These things we promptly attended to, for we knew that now, with their sleds so much lightened by what the dogs, as well as the men themselves, were eating, they would travel the more rapidly and so be the more difficult to catch. If the sailor's proverb that a stern chase is a long chase, is true on sea, it is equally so on a four hundred miles' race on the ice, in the cold and bitter winter.

That night as we sat round the fire while my



(Drawing I)

THE STORY OF THE DISCOVERY OF THE CACHED FISH



men were having their last pipe, one of the Indians said in his quiet way :—

“ I think surely the men ahead of us will now try hard to get their new flannel shirts.”

“ What do you mean ? ” I asked, feigning ignorance, for I had tried to keep from these two Indians with me, the fact of a promise quietly made to the drivers of the dog sleds ahead, that if they could reach our home first, they would each be thus rewarded.

With a quick searching look in my face, for it came out later that he was only feeling his ground, he said :—

“ O not much, Ookemou. But the night before they started when we were all sleeping or trying to, in that one big room, I heard one of them who talks in his sleep, say :—‘ Shirts, fine new shirts, one new shirt apiece, ho ! ho ! ’ Then he went asleep and said no more. Then I began thinking, What does he mean ? So I remember when Jack was nearly drowned when he broke through the thin ice in the lake and the water turned so soon to ice, Ookemou said, ‘ A good new flannel shirt to the man first to the woods to build a fire to save Jack ! ’ and I got that shirt.

“ So as I lay there thinking it over, that man in his sleep saying, ‘ new flannel shirt,’ it comes

to me that our Ookemou to make those men hurry up and go fast, has made some promise to them."

Then his eyes, with a quick glance, searched me again as though he would read me to find out if this surmise were correct.

I confess that I have not the powers of an Indian to wear the mask of self-control as he can, and so, with a laugh, I had to admit that he had guessed the truth, that to encourage those men ahead of us to push on as rapidly as possible, they would be thus rewarded if they succeeded in reaching home before us.

"But what about us?" he asked.

"A good new shirt apiece for you both if you will catch them before we reach home," was my impulsive reply.

"Ookemou!" they both came as near shouting as Indians can. "We will get those shirts."

The dogs were called up and each given an extra half of a whitefish. This, with the two already given, was a fine supper indeed.

Then by the light of our blazing camp-fire the Indians secured the wood needed for the early breakfast which would be prepared and eaten long before daylight. The dog harness was all carefully looked over and even the place where each dog was now sleeping, was noted.

I was quickly tucked away under my blankets and robes with Jack, my great St. Bernard, at my back, and Cuffy, a thoroughbred Newfoundland, at my feet. As the men gave the finishing touches to the tucking-me-in process, one of them said:

"Not very long sleep here this time! Ookemou will finish it in his cariole."

What a blessed thing sleep is! And under what varied conditions it comes and soothes us away into its refreshing oblivion. Thus it was here. Out in the wintry forest, with the temperature not less than thirty or forty below zero, no roof above me, lying in a hole dug with snow-shoes out of the snow, with dogs and Indians around me, yet I slept as well as though in a mansion.

In a few hours, I was aroused by the Indians. So soundly had I slept that I had not heard them until I was called. Yet they had arisen, built up the fire and had breakfast ready for us all. No time was lost. The promise of the new shirts was in their thoughts. When breakfast and prayers were over, the sled was soon loaded. In my cariole were placed my robes, so arranged that I could stretch out, and being well wrapped up could go to sleep if I so desired.

Voyageur was then in his prime. He had

known since we had left the settlement that we were homeward bound, and so he scorned the guide ahead of him. Jack and Cuffy and Muff were behind him. It was a magnificent train, and the one that drew our provision sled was not much inferior. Thus equipped, the race for those flannel shirts began. On such a rapid trip I had not expected or intended to do much travelling on foot myself. To keep up with such men and trains, was an utter impossibility. If our two sleds had been as heavily loaded as were the others, and our rate of travelling had been only fifty or sixty miles a day, I would have travelled at least half the time on foot. But here on this rapid route I rode nearly all the time. Indeed, the only times I ran was when I became so cold that I needed some vigorous exercise to warm up the blood and send it tingling through my veins. Then when we stopped on some point to lunch, I would, as soon as the meal was over, hurry on ahead until overtaken.

The stars were shining brightly as we glided out on the trail that had been made by my other trains two days before. In that time the packed snow had hardened like ice. My dogs must have caught the lingering scent of their comrades, as they were so wild to follow up the

trail. The Indian driving my cariole, in which I was snugly wrapped in my robes, had a good deal of difficulty in preventing an upset, ere we emerged from the forest on to the icy surface of the great lake. When once on the lake, however, he had but little work to do except to be on the alert for open cracks, which are one of the great dangers and most difficult to guard against, especially at night. But Voyageur was at the head, and my men were alert and watchful. So, dismissing all fears, I soon fell asleep to the lullaby music of the silvery dog bells.

When I was aroused by my driver, it was to be informed that a second breakfast was ready and that we were thirty miles from where we had slept. The sun was just flooding the beautiful landscape of lake and fir-clad rocky islands, with its glorious morning rays. A good breakfast of civilized food was speedily eaten and then while my men were taking their last cups of tea and eating everything that was left of the breakfast, I hurried on ahead as fast as I could run. But I had not been on the way very long before I was overtaken. Into my cariole and among the robes, they again speedily tucked me; then on and on we sped. Before noon we found the pictographs telling us that the day's

travel of our party ahead was nearly ended, and that this was their fourth day.

So we hurried on and found their camp; and there we had our dinner, where they had slept two nights before. Thus by twelve o'clock we had travelled as far as they had in the whole day.

"I think we will wear those flannel shirts yet!" the men chuckled, as they thought of their splendid progress. No fish had been left here on our down trip, as this was not the usual camping place. So we found nothing in the shape of pictography here.

With renewed zeal the journey was resumed. The sleds of our men ahead were getting lighter and so their progress would be more rapid. They had left no marked indicators for our guidance, telling how early they had left. My shrewd men said, "To judge by the way they had to wander about in the snow looking for some rascally dogs that would not come when called, it must have been long before sunrise."

My Indians, however, resolved if possible to reach their camp even if they only had the shorter half of the day in which to do it. They made a gallant attempt, but it could not be done. We found no sign. Their zeal cooled

considerably when we struck the pictography (drawing II) in the snow, about five o'clock in the afternoon. This one told us that the party had reached that headland and there had had dinner. What galled my drivers was that in addition to the usual pictographic record of their trip, there were three men roughly pictured on the storm-swept side of a smooth granite rock, each holding in his hand a big shirt.

Those with me were wild to hurry on, for here was a direct challenge from the men ahead, who had now thrown to the winds all secrecy in reference to the shirts. I had to interfere and say: "We will sleep here. I cannot allow you to hurt yourselves, or my valuable dogs to be over-driven. We have travelled eighty miles since we left our last night's camp. So we stop here. There is just light enough to make a camp. Get supper and then to bed, and we will be off as early as you like in the morning."

They saw that I was right, and so without a murmur submitted and with a will began the preparation for the night camp.

Many white men sneer at the Indian and call him indolent and lazy, but if any one of this class had been present and seen the way that these men, who had already run eighty miles, used their axes and prepared that camp they

would have been surprised. But few white men could have equalled them.

It was not long ere I was seated on my buffalo robes before a roaring fire. The dogs were fed, the supper cooked and much enjoyed. The stars came out one by one and the cold mysterious Auroras in ghostly forms flitted across the northern sky. The same careful overhauling was given to sleds and harness, and even the feet of the dogs were inspected.

In a short time I was tucked away, completely covered up in my robes. Some dogs cuddled down close to me, while my men wrapped themselves up in their rabbit skins. One of these robes, woven out of a hundred and twenty rabbit skins, is the warmest thing a man can sleep under. When rightly made it is lighter too than an ordinary blanket.

“Breakfast is ready, sir!” was a very early call. But to it I speedily responded, for I was bound to see fair play, and so would not unnecessarily delay my men. My preparations for breakfast were very few. Washing in the camp, when the cold is so intense, is unknown. It would be simply dangerous.

The routine at the camp does not much vary, so I need not again go into details. Suffice to say we were soon off. We had gained a day and



(Drawing II)
THE CHALLENGE



a-half, and here it was the fifth day and the journey more than half over. At Berens River we only delayed long enough to have a brief meal, while we gave the news and left the packet of letters and papers for the Hudson's Bay Company's post at that place. Here we learned that our head trains had slept there for a few hours the second night before and so were still over a day ahead of us. The Hudson's Bay officer said they were all well and eager to reach Norway House before us.

Early in the afternoon we found their midday sign of their fifth day, and beside it the rough sketch of a dog on three feet. This meant that one dog was lame. This was an unfortunate thing for them, and I said so to my men. But they only chuckled:—"Flannel shirts sure." Our delay there was a short one, and then on we hurried. The sun had long set and the stars were shining, when Voyageur suddenly turned from the smooth icy lake in to the left and led us into the trail in the snow which had been made by our friends ahead of us. They had had to go in some distance ere they found a sheltered place for the camp, with abundance of dry wood. In the gloom of the forest into which the old dog had led us, it seemed to us so dark that I anticipated anything but a pleasant time. But such

men as I had were equal to any emergency of this kind. They groped around in the deserted camp and soon found enough dry wood with which to start a small fire. By the light of this, abundance of wood was speedily secured and soon we were at home. The dogs were fed and went to sleep. They were feeling the effects of the long and rapid travelling. My men, however, laughed and acted as though they were just beginning the trip. I did notice that both of them, after they had had their supper, stripped themselves and rubbed their muscular bodies in the snow; then throwing their blankets over their backs they sat down so near the hot blazing fire that soon the steam rolled up from both of them. A quick, vigorous, dry rubbing followed and then after they had packed me in, they rolled themselves up in their rabbit blankets for a few hours of sleep. No pictographic signs were here. The men had not thought that we would turn in so far into the forest. But Voyageur had struck their trail and was not to be denied. Daylight found us passing one of the points near Poplar Point where one summer, when I was travelling in my canoe, some treacherous pagan Indians summoned us to the shore by the smoke sign. We were hurrying home and did not wish to be delayed, but these rascally fellows, wishing

to get a share of my supplies, made this distant smoke signal to call us to the shore.

The signal is given by making a small fire of damp grass or weeds. When there is a dense smoke, but no flame, two persons hold a blanket over the fire until it bulges out with smoke. Then a sudden skilful jerk removes the blanket, and if there is no wind the smoke rises up in a globular or balloon shape. The blanket is at once replaced over the smoking flameless heat, and the process is repeated. Certain numbers of globes of smoke indicate certain things, as may be arranged.

Now, however, we were in the depth of winter, and where then the waves rolled in their abundance, now the Frost King had so asserted his authority that there were several feet of solid ice under us.

We had our dinner where our leaders had had a second breakfast, and well on in the afternoon we found the noon sign of the sixth day. This was the last indication of their progress that we were able to read in the snow, as the weather now changed. While it had been intensely cold nearly all the time since we had left the settlement, yet the sky was bright and clear, so the marks on the snow, as well as the camps, had all been as they had made them. But now a

storm assailed us. The strong wind whirled the snow in such eddies around us, that the travelling was most disagreeable. Fortunately it did not develop into a blizzard, so as to compel us to camp until it was over. Greater care was now exercised on our part, but to our delight we found that Voyageur was nearly always on the trail, which occasionally my men were able to detect, when the wind swept the newly fallen snow away.

Thus perseveringly we pushed on. I was catching the enthusiasm of my men, and whenever possible ran until I was about tired out. Thinking that my zeal in running was much appreciated, my chagrin may be imagined when my driver said :—

“Ookemou, please keep in your cariole, we want to get on fast.”

At Montreal Point we found the fire of the party ahead still burning.

“Only four hours ahead of us,” said my men as they examined the fire.

The storm had completely abated, and as the dogs had long since caught the hot scent of their comrades and were wild to go on, I gave the men complete control, saying I could ride as far as they could run.

Nothing could have pleased them better.

"Then, Ookemou," they said, "we stop not again except for a quick eat," that is, a lunch, "until you see your home."

The stars had long been shining when we put out from the camp at Montreal Point directly for the end of the lake near the mouth of the mighty Nelson River.

Of that long run I knew but little, as I was asleep in my cariole most of the time.

A shout of exultation from my men as my cariole suddenly stopped, caused me to throw off my robes and spring out on the trail.

Here before us was the camp, and the burning fire that told us it had been but lately left. To gather up the burning log ends, and quickly melt some snow and make a kettle of tea, was speedily done. A provision bag was opened and a hurried, but much needed, breakfast eaten, and then ere sunrise, we were off on the home stretch.

How the dogs did travel! And yet not so fast but that the men easily kept up to them without any apparent suffering.

At Playgreen Point we met some Indians who were there encamped. Eagerly my men inquired of them:

"How long since the other sleds passed by?"

"About a half an hour, but they were going as rapidly as possible."

"Marche!" is shouted to the dogs, and we are off.

It is going to be a close race.

And so now my men, conscious of their own endurance, begin talking encouragingly to the dogs, although they do not need a word. But it seems to relieve the strain the men are enduring, and so they just croon out their loving, endearing words to the dogs, as though they were children.

Not a dog was struck on the whole long journey. These two pet trains of mine were taught by kindness alone, with the exception of the peerless Voyageur. Sad to relate, it was the blow of a whip, from his former master in a fit of passion, that had forever robbed him of one of his bright eyes.

To those loving words the noble dogs respond, and on, on, more rapidly we go. At the Fort, two miles from home, we halt a moment to hand the package of letters and papers to the officers there on the watch. The passing of the other trains had brought them all to the river-side and so they are eager for their letters.

"Where are the other sleds?" my men call out.

"Just ahead of you, around the flagstaff rock," is shouted back.

"Marche!" and we are off again.

Around the rock we rush and there, not half a mile ahead of us, are the men and dog trains, that for six days we have been following. Their quick eyes detect us and they see that they are not quite so sure of their new shirts after all. Soon we hear their shoutings and cheery calls to their dogs. They are doing their best to win. As it is now about midday, the whole of the village seems to be on the lookout as we rapidly speed along. The Indians line up each side of the icy trail and quickly see, from the fact that the Ookemou's famous train is near the rear, instead of, as usual, at the front, that there is something of interest going on.

Slowly we are gaining. Voyageur's traces are tight, and if he only had dogs behind him with legs as long as his, he would soon be in the usual place at the head of all the trains. As it is, we reach the last train and it is a procession, now, of five trains with us in the rear.

Every driver is excited. Indian stoicism is thrown to the winds. How they cheer and shout! We are not a half mile from home.

Old Voyageur, not accustomed to be in the rear of any train, will not be denied.

The icy expanse of Playgreen Lake, on which we are running, is clear of snow, and so the old dog springs out of the line of trains and dashes for the front. Foot by foot he gains upon them. Now he is side by side with the second train, now he is closing up the distance that separates him from the first. With a bound, he turns to make the last big effort to pass it.

But we are now at the foot of the little hill on which stands our home, where loved ones with bright eyes and warm hearts, are waiting to welcome us. There also stands the chief. As we dash up, the excited men of the two head trains, shout out:

“Chief, which train won?”

“Both exactly even,” he replies.

So all the men got their shirts and there was great rejoicing.

CHAPTER THREE

The Call and Journey to the North Land

The opening of the great Northwest. Our call to go to the Red man's country. The long journey. Thirty days on the Prairies. Old Fort Garry. Lake Winnipeg. A welcome at Norway House.



III

AND now that my trusty dog-drivers are happy in the possession of their warm flannel shirts, let us go back and say something about how it came to pass that we happened to be in that wild North land in those early days.

There was then no flourishing city of Winnipeg, neither in name was there any province of Manitoba. Even Dakota and Minnesota were only mentioned as the great territories over which still roamed the bloodthirsty Sioux Indians whose recent massacres of the few adventurous pioneer settlers had caused sorrow and tears in many an eastern home. Then the west was still the great wild west, where roamed the buffalo in countless herds, followed incessantly by the still wilder red men, the ideal hunters of the plains. West and North, those vast illimitable prairies stretched, until their very extent seemed limitless and their possibilities, incomprehensible.

As increasing knowledge of these vast regions with rumors of their possibilities became more widely circulated, a new spirit was in the air

and men began to feel the throbings of a larger, grander life. The Call of the West, timid and uncertain as it was at first, became so loud at last that it could not be ignored. Yet for a time men hesitated, in spite of the increasing reports of the vastness of the country and its resources. But the reports kept increasing. Adventurous explorers returned with their glowing accounts of illimitable prairies of the richest soil, where the buffalo in myriads thundered over them, not only revelling in the richest grasses in the summer months, but also finding in the natural dried hay, sufficient nourishment to sustain them during the winter season.

Missionaries and others who even in those remote days had penetrated far up the Saskatchewan and even to the Athabasca and Peace Rivers brought back not only marvellous tales of the splendid climate and beauty of those regions but also as evidences of the possibilities of those places agriculturally, many specimens of the grains and vegetables that were there easily raised.

These and other evidences could not be gainsaid or resisted.

Thus the great Western March began and continues and will continue as long as men crave

land and homes, that they can call their own. Scores of thousands have settled there and there is room for millions more.

The churches, quick to see in these great Providential movements, splendid opportunities for usefulness, as well as their imperative obligations to give the privileges of religious worship to these multitudes, have ever been alert and energetic in their work. So now, as in the early days of the settlements in the East, the adventurous emigrant on the plains is hardly settled in his abode, ere the devoted missionary is there with the Means of Grace.

And not only were the courageous white emigrants from the beginning of this great Western movement followed up by the Heralds of the Cross, but the wandering Indians, the original proprietors of those regions, were in a measure, searched out and in wise and conciliatory ways, shown the grandeur of the Cross and the blessedness of the Christian religion. The successful missions, existing to-day among the various tribes are the evidences not only of the power of the gospel to save, but the foretaste of the time when they shall all be Christianized and civilized.

To the writer and his young bride was this

grace given in 1868, that they should go far hence and preach this blessed gospel, the unsearchable riches of Christ, among the Indians in the far north land even beyond the prairie province of Manitoba.

Our call to the work was very sudden and unexpected. It seemed then a great wrench to leave a flourishing church, a loving-hearted congregation, a large circle of friends, and all the blessings of civilization, to go out into the distant wilderness in utter absolute ignorance both of the place and of the people.

The request to go had come from a missionary committee, composed of sixteen godly ministers and laymen. Startled as we were by a request which meant so much to us, we dared not lightly consider it. The more we pondered it and prayed about it, the more convinced we were that it was of God.

Of the farewell meetings and the varied preparations for outgoing, we have written in other volumes, so we need not repeat them here. Kindred spirits, full of zeal and enthusiasm, were with us and so we made quite a display as with our good horses and canvas-covered wagons we began in the city of Hamilton our long journey, which was for my wife and myself, to occupy two months and nineteen days.

By steamboat and railroad, we went up the Great Lakes and crossed to the Mississippi, and there at St. Paul, we reharnessed our horses and began our march over the great prairies.

In a few days we passed beyond the last vestige of civilization. Then day after day we slowly moved along over the then famous Northwest Trail. The monotony of the journey was at times broken by some queer sights and exciting experiences. One of the things that most interested us was the meeting and passing of the Red River trains of ox-carts. When first observed far away in the distance they looked like some great serpent slowly crawling over the flat prairie. As no oil or grease was ever used upon the axle trees the screeching, nerve-racking, discordant sounds, those hundreds of carts made, as they slowly moved along was simply indescribable.

Then the wild Indians and the buffalo roamed in those regions and adventurous travellers, like ourselves, had to camp out and sleep on the ground when their day's journey ended. Thus our party travelled for thirty days, sleeping each night on the prairies.

At Fort Garry, now the flourishing city of Winnipeg, the Chicago of the Canadian Northwest, we tarried a few days, sleeping each night

in our camp, as there was not a hotel or lodging house. Here we hurriedly made all needed preparations for the latter part of our long journey. We parted with our fine faithful horse, that had brought us so well all the way from St. Paul, as we had no further need for him.

The last fourteen days were spent in an open boat on Lake Winnipeg. These Hudson's Bay Company's inland boats are, or were, one of the features of the country. They are emphatically "of the country," as we have never seen nor heard of anything just like them in any other land. They are sharp at both ends and are bulky enough to carry about four tons of supplies. They are made on a keel so strong, that they can be safely dragged over rough portages, of which there are so many in that wild country, without suffering any injury. Their full crew is eight oarsmen and a steersman. They carry a mast, which, when not in use, is lashed to the side of the boat, and a large square sail, with which, in a good wind, they can make very fast time.

We embarked with our luggage at lower Fort Garry in one of these boats, which was manned by a crew of Christian Indians from the mission, to which we were now appointed. We were of course delighted with this arrangement,

and although we could not as yet speak their language, we found that some of them could understand English, and so, using them as interpreters, we got on delightfully.

Their primitive method of cooking their flat cakes did not at first strike us very favorably. We noticed that while some of them, when acting as cooks, for they cooked in turns—did make some slight efforts to conform to certain of the prejudices of civilization, as regards cleanliness, others seemed to completely ignore them.

One sturdy Indian much amused us, especially as we had not to eat his cakes. When his turn came to act as cook, he carried ashore the bag of flour and, merely cleaning the granite rock with a few passes of his moccasined foot, he then and there poured out about twelve or fifteen pounds of flour. As no dish happened to be handy, he carried up sufficient water in his old, dirty, rowdy hat with which to transform the flour into dough! He then industriously kneaded it until he had it of a consistency to suit him. Then he divided it into chunks of about a pound weight, each of which he cleverly flattened out and secured on the end of a stick, the other end of which he fixed in the ground before the hot fire, which others had prepared. When one side of the cakes was cooked, they

were turned, and, when the other side was browned, the work was done.

In addition to these flat cakes thus prepared, our crew had an abundant supply of pemmican, as in those days the buffalo was still to be found on the plains farther west. This pemmican, which is the dried meat of the buffalo, pounded fine and packed in bags made of the skins of the slaughtered animal, is very nourishing food, and was much preferred by the Indians on their long journeys for the trading companies, to any other article of food that could be obtained for them.

We soon became very much interested in our Indian crew. The steersman's name was Thomas Mamanowatum, which in English is, "Oh, be Joyful." He was, however, best known as "Big Tom," on account of his gigantic stature. He was a very good-natured, quiet man. Of his sterling qualities we soon learned, and through all the years in which we so intimately knew him, it was only to admire and respect him. There were others in our party to whom we became much attached. There were two or three wives of the men in the boat, who had obtained permission to accompany their husbands on this trip into the Red River country, by the courtesy of the Hudson's Bay Company. With them

was an old widowed woman, Mary Murdo. We became very much attached to her, not only because she was such a bright, clever woman and a most devout and consistent Christian, but also because of the tragic incident which robbed her of her husband, who was one of the most skillful steersmen and guides in the Hudson's Bay Company's service.

Murdo's tragic death occurred when he was taking a brigade of boats, loaded with furs, down to York Factory, on Hudson Bay, for shipment to England. When running the wild rapids at Hell's Gates in the Nelson River, he was suddenly hurled from his boat into the raging waters and drowned.

As we had no appliances on such a skiff-like boat for cooking, we went ashore for our meals. Sometimes the boat could be rowed up so close to the rocks that there was no difficulty in stepping ashore. This, however, was not always the case as sand-bars or shallow spots were often between us and our desired landing-places. However, such things troubled very little these clever Indians, who are so resourceful and full of expedients. The Indians, both men and women, take to the water as naturally as ducks; so, when we struck these poor landing-places, the boatmen quickly sprang over the side of the

boat and were soon ashore. A broad-shouldered Indian, by the name of Soquaatum, always in these emergencies relieved me from the necessity of doing what John Sunday, a native Indian missionary, had said I would have to do—carry my wife on my back. Soquaatum would quickly wade around to the side of the boat where Mrs. Young was awaiting him, and carefully taking her on his broad shoulders, would carry her to the shore. I waded ashore as did the rest, except on one occasion, where the water was unusually deep. Here the good-natured Big Tom asked to be allowed to carry me on his back. In a moment of weakness I consented, and to my dismay, but to the merriment of all the rest, he slipped, and over his head I tumbled into the water.

Thus with ever-varying experiences, which broke the monotony of the journey, we travelled on, and, while happy in the prospect of the work before us, we could not but at times be startled, at the rapid transitions through which we were passing. Memory carried us back over a few brief weeks to our happy home in civilization, with all that that implied. Now here we were out in an open boat on the great Lake Winnipeg, or encamped with some Indians on its picturesque shores. But we felt that it was all

right, and we were happier and safer here than we could possibly be in any other place.

Reaching our destination, at Norway House, we were very cordially welcomed by the Rev. Charles Stringfellow—the missionary who had for long years been doing grand service at Norway House, and who, upon our coming, was, with his invalid wife, immediately to return to civilization. The Christian Indians, who while sorry to part with the man who had been a blessing to them, cheerfully welcomed his successor. From Mr. Stringfellow, who remained with us for a few days ere he left, we obtained all information possible about the mission work.

At Berens River, and also at Poplar Point, where our boat had halted, on the way up Lake Winnipeg, we had heard the monotonous sounds of the drums of pagan conjurers. Here, however, at this mission, the first sounds we heard were those of prayer and praise from a company of Christian Indians assembled in the prayer-meeting. Thus cheered by these evidences of triumphs already won, we were encouraged to hope for victories yet to be obtained.

We were very much pleased with the Indian boys and girls of the village, with whom we speedily became great friends. It was not many hours after our arrival, before the bright-eyed

boys were eager to show me their skill in the use of the bow and arrow, and, as these had been my favorite weapons when a boy, I was not loth to enter into their sports and be a boy with them once more. I could see, however, that they considered me rather awkward in the use of their bows and one of them in fun whispered to a comrade standing near, as he watched me, and saw how easily I missed the mark, a word which sounded very much like "moneyas,"—which I afterwards found meant a greenhorn.

However, they seldom missed the mark, and so they speedily won all the prizes which I then had to give them, and in many a subsequent contest.

In orderly succession the Christian Indians came and called upon us, and, on being introduced by Mr. Stringfellow, in their quiet but kindly way, welcomed us to their midst.

The pagan Indians at first, with one exception, kept aloof, but from the first night, by their noisy powwows and monotonous drumming, let us know of their presence, and that there was no disposition on their part, for the present at least, to renounce the religion of their forefathers and become Christians.

I must confess that while these tangible evidences of a degrading paganism, at first some-

what startled me, their music seemed but as the bugle-call to battle, and I felt nerved and strengthened for the conflict, in which I was assured that the victory would be on the side of the all-conquering Lord. In after years these hopes and prayers were more than realized. The one pagan who did promptly call upon me was a noted conjurer, called Tapastanum. The most conspicuous looking article of dress on him was a large, round looking-glass which he wore over his heart, and of which he was very proud.

Shouting out his "Ho ! Ho's !" he came and shook hands with me. Then immediately after he loudly exclaimed :

"I hope you have brought plenty of tea and tobacco for me ! "

Greeting him cordially, I could only say,

"I have brought you something better. It is a message of good-will from the Great Spirit, who is your father and mine."

After these various interviews, I was taken out into the fish house, and there, among many other things I was told how the whitefish, our principal article of food, were to be caught in gill nets and then kept frozen solid and hung up secure from the thievish Indian dogs.

Upon me was impressed the necessity of being sure to secure abundance of them, as they would

be the chief and often the only article of food we would have during the winter months.

Some idea of the continued severity of the winters before us was thus learned, when the thousands of whitefish required, and which could be caught only in a period of, say, three weeks, would remain frozen solid from November to April inclusive.

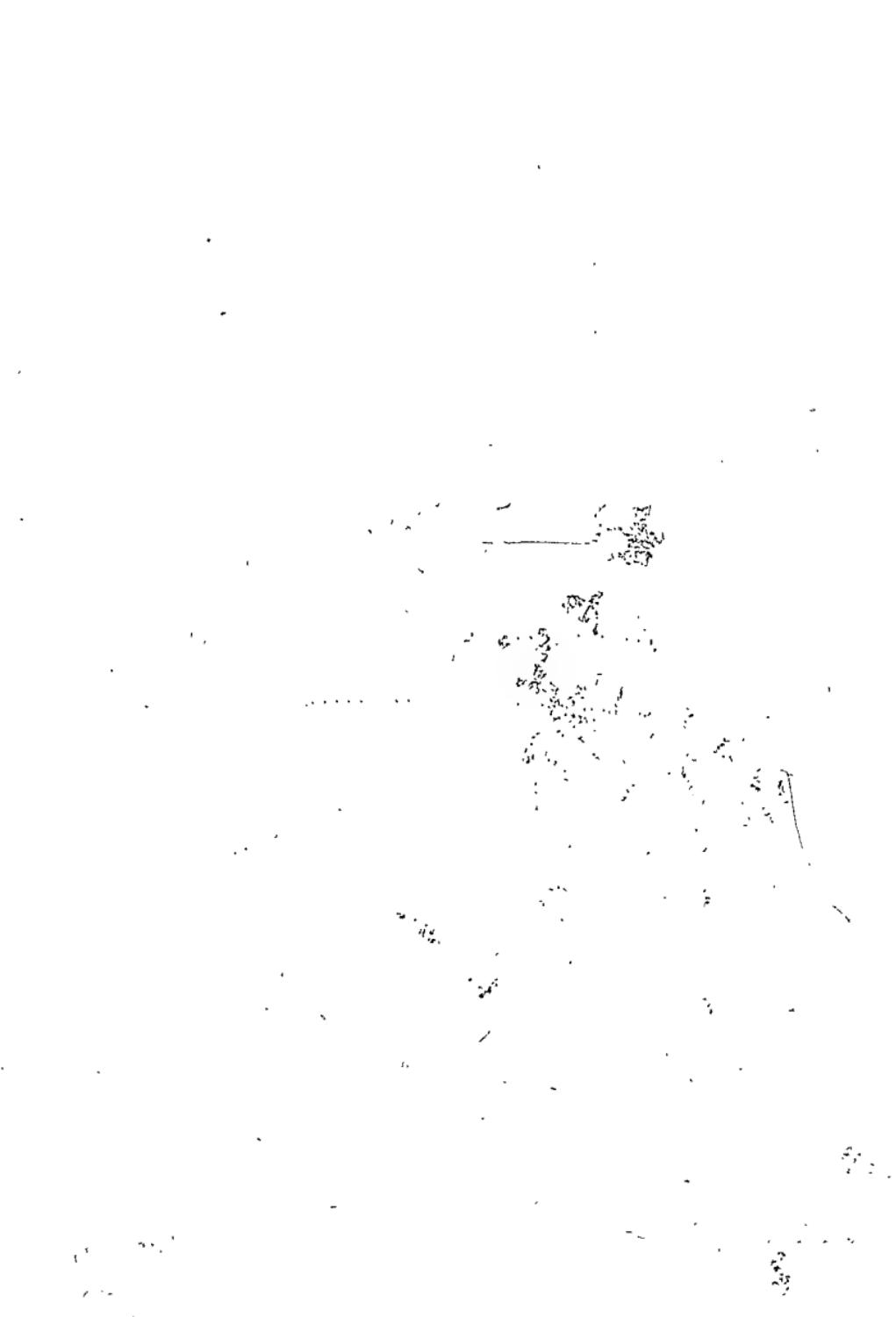
Then the birch bark canoes were examined, and it was explained to me that this capacious one was for the journeys in the stormy lakes; this narrow, light one was for the long river trips, where there were many portages to be made, and it would have to be carried around them on the head of one of my canoemen. Of some old ones patched in various places, with pieces of birch bark and daubed with pitch, I was informed that they were still good for the fall fishing, when our winter's supply would be obtained, and also for the sturgeon fishing, when these great fish visited our part of the lake.

All of these things were revelations to me, both unique and interesting, and, as I listened and endeavored to understand, I felt that a new life was indeed before me.

CHAPTER FOUR

Introducing My Dogs

My first introduction to the sleigh dogs of the North Land. The survival of the fittest. Dog travelling. No roads—long winters. The Eskimo Dog. Cunning noble animals.



IV

FROM Mr. Stringfellow, my worthy predecessor, I had my first introduction to the Huskie or Eskimo dogs. He took me out to the stockade yards, which served as a kennel and a place of exercise for the seven medium-sized dogs which constituted his pack on hand. I confess I was not favorably impressed with them. They were neither pure Eskimo nor any other breed,—only seven nondescript mongrels, that had not much in them to win my admiration or make me long for a trip with such creatures as my steeds. I subsequently found out, when winter came and the dog-travelling really began, that my first impression was correct, and so, as speedily as possible, I strengthened and increased my pack by importing from home the biggest and strongest dogs it was possible for me to obtain. In a couple of years I had some fairly good trains and began my long trips to distant points.

Why are dogs used in travelling in that land and not in other places? It is simply because

there is no possibility of travelling in any other way except on foot, and that is really done by most of those who even take dogs with them. The Indians never ride. The guide is ever on foot in front. The only persons supposed to ride are the Hudson's Bay officers and other gentlemen of the service, when going from post to post in the country, and the missionary. And even they have to walk sometimes for days together, on account of the deep snows, or the heavily-loaded sleds which the dogs have to drag along.

In these northern regions winter reigns from October till May. There are no railroads, no tram-cars, no ordinary country roads on which horses can travel. The snow is deep, and as there are no thaws after the first snow falls, until spring-time, each succeeding snow-storm adds to what has already fallen, so that in some winters the quantity is very great. Thus it is easily seen how utterly useless horses, mules or oxen would be in such a place, where long journeys have to be made. It is a case of "the survival of the fittest," and the dog has been found to be the best, and indeed the only, animal that can do the work.

How the Eskimo dog was evolved we know not. But it is a well known fact that for the

rough, hard work of every-day dog travelling, he stands preëminent. The amount of privations, beatings and starvings he will survive and come out of, fat and flourishing, is simply incredible. I was able by the greatest care, to get more good work and greater speed out of my imported St. Bernard and Newfoundland dogs, than I ever did out of the Eskimo dogs; but if I had allowed them to be exposed to the hardships that the Eskimos are constantly meeting, they would have all perished the first winter. For my fine dogs I carried woolen shoes which were like great long mittens without the thumbs. I gave them a buffalo skin on which to sleep at the wintry camp, or more frequently allowed them to sleep on the top of my fur robes and around me, when my Indian attendants had tucked me away in my bed at the camp-fire in the woods; or in a hole dug in the snow.

The Eskimo dog scorned such luxuries. All he asked for at the camp-fire, were his two white fish as his one meal of the day. Then when they were quickly swallowed, he soon pawed a hole in the snow, curled himself up in a heap, and, with his bushy tail over his nose, slept until he heard his driver looking for him. Then, in all probability, he quietly skulked

away and cunningly hid himself, to the delay of the party and the annoyance of all concerned, except himself.

There seems to be but little affection in Eskimo dogs. This is hardly to be wondered at, considering the way they are treated. They seem to have come to regard mankind as their enemies, from whom they are to steal everything they can, and whose patience they are to try in every possible way. Even those that I raised from puppyhood, took all petting as an insult, and never seemed to feel right until their comrades had given them a thrashing for submitting to such weakness.

Still they could work, and keep at it day after day in a marvellous manner. There is a latent strength in them that is wonderful. Often when we would be travelling towards the close of a long day, where the work was very laborious on account of the deep snow and our heavy loads, a fox or wildcat or some other animal, aroused, perhaps, by the guide, would suddenly cross the trail in front of us. My ! how the dogs would forget their weariness, and considering the heavy loads behind them but as trifles would dash after their prey. Nor would they cease their mad rush, until perhaps the sled behind them would be suddenly brought to a standstill, as it

jammed up against some standing tree or fallen log.

Many and cunning were the tricks of the native dogs. Their sole ambition seemed to be ever eating. The one absorbing thought that appeared uppermost, was to get hold of food to satisfy their craving, and if it could possibly be stolen it was very much more enjoyed. I have repeatedly seen these dogs when they thought they were not being watched, leave their fish to go and snap up something not half so palatable as their supper. To steal and devour their driver's moccasins, which he had hung up at the camp-fire to dry, was a trick that some were most clever at. Others had a liking for the long deer-skin whip-lash, and in speedily absorbing it, seemed to have the idea that it would do more good inside, than by being heavily laid on on the outside. So fierce and savage were they that neither calves nor young cattle under two years of age, could be allowed to run at large.

There were some special dogs that I could not but love, such as faithful old Voyageur, the matchless leader, whose heart I broke by thoughtlessly putting a young dog ahead of him in the train; and Rover, the dog doctor, who healed and made well for me many a wounded dog by the skillful, persistent use of his

tongue. And Hector, who saved my boy's life, when the great wolf would have made a meal of him, and who in his autobiography has so well told the story. And Kooma, the whitest dog I ever saw yet the greatest rascal to get other dogs fighting, while he himself was too cowardly to join in the mêlée. But with these and a few other exceptions, I eventually succeeded in eliminating the native dogs from my pack and had in their places the splendid St. Bernards and Newfoundlands of civilization.

Of these the noblest were Jack and Cuffy. But there were others that served me grandly and well. With them I travelled some thousands of miles each winter and thus was able to carry the glad tidings of salvation to distant lonely places in the interior where the gospel had never been proclaimed. The sufferings at times were terrible, but the triumphs more than compensated. Of some of these journeys and their varied adventures we shall have much to say.

CHAPTER FIVE

Dog Travelling in the North Land

Dog travelling experiences. Dogs used extensively by fur traders. Dogs in summer—a long holiday. The dog sleds—how constructed. The harness of moose-skin.



V

TRAVELLING with dogs! Yes, and it is not a bad method of travelling, after all, considering the character of the country, the absence of roads, and the intensity of the cold, if you have abundance of warm clothing, plenty of food, good dogs, a clever guide, and congenial Indian companions.

But to have a good time you must have good dogs. For, as there are men and men, and even boys and boys, so there are dogs and dogs. And there is the greatest difference imaginable between the good and the bad dogs of the North Land. It was ever a pleasure to travel with a splendid train of jolly, high-spirited, willing dogs who barked and bounded while in their harness, and were eager to be at work. Often there was a keen rivalry as to which of them should be first harnessed, and then the fortunate one because he could not laugh his delight, would express his joy by a most comical grin.

On the other hand, a poor lot of sullen, skulking dogs, that did the least amount of work possible, and were apparently ever trying to see how

provoking and cunning they could be, were indeed a nuisance and a trial.

"Missionary! There is no use of your trying to make a Christian out of me unless you give me better dogs than these to drive!" Thus was I addressed by a French half-breed, whom out of sympathy I had taken into my home one bitterly cold night, to save him from starvation.

Men of stronger intellects than Päsche had found that handling poor dogs was about the biggest trial of patience that had come to them. And yet for over two hundred years the only method of travelling, unless you go on snow-shoes for several months of each year, both in the northern part of the Dominion of Canada and in Alaska, was, and is, by dog train.

Throughout all of those northern regions, were scattered the trading posts of that great company known as the Honorable Hudson's Bay Company. So perfect was the organization and so energetic the government that there was constant communication between the headquarters of each great division and every outpost, no matter how apparently inaccessible and remote. The result was that hundreds of trains of dogs, driven by the most enduring Indians and led on by the cleverest of guides, were ever on the move through those vast regions, during all the winter months.

The best dogs of the country were owned by the Honorable Hudson's Bay Company. We can readily understand, from the fact that so much work had to be accomplished, that the men in the service, from the officials, who had often to make their long journeys from post to post, to the drivers employed, would make every effort to secure and retain the very best dogs possible.

The short brilliant summer of the North Land is one continuous holiday for the dogs. The treatment, however, which they receive during the summer months, when no work is required of them, varies according to the means and kindly disposition of their owners. The dogs belonging to a trading post were generally sent off in charge of a trusted Indian to some small island, where the waters abounded in fish. Here the old man camped with his family, and his sole duty was to keep his troop of dogs well supplied with their favorite food. But the dogs of the Indians were not always thus carefully looked after. While some of the natives did all that their limited means would permit them to do during the summer, when as a general thing, there was not an overabundance of food, even for the people themselves, we are sorry to have to say that, from the time they unharnessed the

animals at the end of the last trip in spring, until they captured them for work again in the beginning of the next winter, some of the Indians paid not the slightest attention to their dogs. Of course, if there happened to be an abundance of fish, the dog got all beyond what the people themselves could consume. If any bear or deer were killed, the dogs received a share of the offal and had the bones to pick, but usually they were so neglected that they were nothing better than the scavengers of the villages, and were ever so hungry that they devoured most greedily everything that their sharp teeth and cunning thievish habits could secure.

As clever thieves they are unrivalled, as many an unsophisticated traveller and missionary has learned to his cost. They are quite equal to wolves in their fierce attack upon sheep and calves, while domestic fowl are considered dainties to be captured and eaten at the first possible moment. The stories told of the audacity and cunning they show in outwitting even those who are well aware of their ways are marvellous and amusing. Not very comical, however, are they, when the loss occurring through their tricks has been serious, and dire sufferings have come to those who have been their victims.

I travelled some thousands of miles by dog



FEEDING THE DOGS DURING THE SUMMER



train, and, while I found that this primitive method had its drawbacks, there was also a good deal of pleasurable excitement about it, and, best of all, it enabled me to do a large amount of pioneering, as well as of missionary and educational work, which otherwise it would have been utterly impossible for me to have performed.

The pure Eskimo dog had become a rarity among the Indians where I lived. There had been such an admixture of breeds of various kinds that as regards appearance, it was often impossible to tell which one predominated ; but as to the general or complete depravity, it was very evident that the Eskimo was first and foremost. It was hardly to be wondered at that the average dog of the native was such an inveterate thief and all-around scamp, when one looked at the way in which he was generally treated. With few exceptions the dog was never regularly fed. He had to steal his food or die. As he loved life, he ever kept his wits sharpened to steal anything and everything his voracious appetite craved, and his marvellous digestion could master.

I suffered so much at first, when I was obliged to use these native dogs, from the loss of food, leather shirts, moccasins, harness, whips, etc., that I was several times almost stranded on my

journeys by the destruction their teeth and appetites wrought. One night some of them stole from under my head a bag in which were some precious biscuits, while the same night, others got the meat bag from under the head of my Indian guide. All of the food we had was in these two bags, except some frozen whitefish, which fortunately had been hung up out of reach. The dogs not only devoured the contents of the two bags, but also the greater part of the one in which the meat had been kept.

And yet these animals won my admiration and respect for the work they did, and what they enabled me to accomplish. Day after day amid the terrible cold, through trackless forests or over vast, frozen lakes, not only in the brilliant sunshine of those short but bright Arctic days, but when blizzards raged and howled like demons for their prey, they bravely pushed on and on, dauntless and untiring, displaying such sagacity and reserve of strength that I could not but be proud of them, even if they did resent every effort I made to win their friendship or their love. For the average Indian dog hates a white man and, whenever he dares, considers it his duty to snarl at him and to rob him without mercy. Kindness and compassion he considers a sign of weakness and acts accordingly.

The sled of the Indians is a very light affair and yet will carry, if necessary, a heavy load. The birch tree which gave the Indian the beautiful bark for his canoe and wigwam, also furnished him with the wood for his dog-sled. The original method of manufacture was to cut a birch tree into lengths of ten or twelve feet, and then, with long, thin wedges, to split the logs into boards.

These the natives smoothed and fashioned to suit their purpose. When made smooth and even, two or three of them were securely fastened edge to edge with deerskin twine. Then one end of these boards, thus joined together, was made thin and, after having been carefully steamed, was bent into a half circle, thus forming the head sled. Cross-bars to strengthen it were carefully lashed on, and loops were fastened along the sides, by which the loads were easily tied upon it.

When thus completed the sleds were from fifteen to twenty inches wide and from eight to ten feet long. The Hudson's Bay Company were accustomed to get sawed oak boards from the more southern sections of the country, and out of these their carpenters made sleds similar in construction to those used by the Indians, but very much stronger and consequently able to

carry much heavier loads. When rigged with a back and sides of parchment, the sleds were called carioles.

Four dogs constitute a train. They are, if at all efficient, quite able to draw on one of these sleds a load of from seven hundred to a thousand pounds, at the rate of from four to seven miles an hour, according to the character of the roads.

Roads, as the word is understood in civilized lands, are utterly unknown to those regions. There is not a mile of road in thousands and thousands of square miles. The surveyor has never entered those regions. It is still one trackless, roadless country in winter, where the snow lies deep and even the trails made by wild animals are obliterated by the gale. The so-called "good roads" of such regions, are the vast icy expanses where the terrible cold has frozen up the lakes and rivers so firmly that the missionaries and Indians can, with perfect safety, dash along over the surface at great speed. Sometimes with good dogs and splendid Indians we travelled over those icy fields at the rate of seventy or ninety miles a day. No wonder we called those our good roads!

Our bad roads were the dreary forest regions, where amidst the trees and fallen logs and many

other obstructions, the snow lay deep, and where the only traces of our route were the tracks made by the clever guide, whose place was always at the front. Sometimes for days and days together we had to push or force our way through these trackless regions. The snow was everywhere. The underbrush and low branches were bowed down with it. Yet on and on we had to push, or at times crawl, through so many obstructions that we were often thankful if we could make twenty-five or forty miles in a long day's journey. Then, no matter how weary with the adventures of the day, when it was about ended, we had to make our camp for the night's sojourn. There was no friendly Indian to invite us to his wigwam, or hospitable white settler with the latch-string hanging outside of his log-cabin door. For many days and nights on those long trips we saw no vestige of human habitations. So we had to do the best we could independently of the rest of the world.

Fortunately we well knew this would be our lot ere we started, and so, as far as possible, provision was made for every emergency. Our dog-sleds were well loaded. There were blankets and fur robes, and abundance of the fattest of food procurable, for fat is the favorite food of the country. Nature is true to her requirements—

the food that has the most heat in it is that which she gives the most craving for. The fattest of meat and the fattest of fish were always in demand. Then, besides, we carried our kettles, dishes, guns, ammunition, medicines, Bibles, and presents for the Indians, and indeed everything essential, and for all emergencies as well. The frozen whitefish for our dogs was about the heaviest part of our loads when the journey commenced. We were careful not to forget a goodly supply of dog shoes for the feet of our civilized dogs. In spite of all care they would at times injure themselves. The pads would be badly cut on the broken ice, sharp points of wood would pierce through the webbing between the toes, and saddest of all, sometimes a part or the whole of the foot would be frozen.

The harnesses were made out of moose-skin, and were strong durable affairs. Some of them, especially those used by the clerks and gentlemen of the Hudson's Bay Company, were often beautifully ornamented with silk and beadwork, and were profusely supplied with little silver bells. The music of these bells the dogs seemed to enjoy, and it was a well known fact that some of them could receive no greater punishment than to be deprived of their bells.

I have nothing but the most pleasant memo-

ries of my faithful Indian attendants, both on the summer and winter trips. The privations and hardships were many, yet they patiently endured them all without murmuring. Food might be all gone and there be but little prospect of securing more for some days, yet they only laughed at the privations and courageously persevered until better days came.

The guide was ever considered the responsible man of the party. He was selected for his knowledge of the route and all-round cleverness. To him I, as well as my dog-drivers, looked in every emergency. He selected the camping-places and arranged the hours of starting, and the time when, and place where, the night was to be spent at the close of the long day's travel. His place was ever at the head. Some of these guides prided themselves on always keeping ahead of the leading train of dogs, on the lookout for dangers or necessities for changing the route.

I confess to a weakness to have my dogs always in the finest condition and my travelling outfit as nearly perfect as my circumstances would allow.

So it was not unusual for me to have as guests at my house and kennels for some days ere the trip began, the men who were to accompany me

on the long journey, and also their dogs which I hired when my own trains were insufficient.

Both men and dogs were there fed to the highest limit of their capacity to eat, and it was remarkable to see how every twenty-four hours of proper feeding, with good, well-cooked food, physically developed both men and beasts. This feeding them so well before starting, was a great saving, as there were not then such demands upon the contents of our sleds.

CHAPTER SIX

The Winter Camp in the Snow

Still on the go. The loving "Farewells." The long, lonely trips. Meals at the camp-fires—our bill of fare. Fat meat and strong tea—the preparation of the camp-fire. Axes brittle as glass in sixty below zero. Digging out our camp in the snow with snow-shoes. Feeding our faithful dogs on fish—for them but one meal a day.

VI

THE sleds, as described in the last chapter, are loaded for a journey ; the eager dogs, long rested, and well fed, are barking their glad challenges to each other, as they spring in their traces, wild to be off.

In the little mission house the loving farewells are being said, since for the next month or six weeks the travellers will be so lost in the wilderness that there will be absolutely no possibility of any communication between them and those left behind.

Then the word is given to the guide that everything is ready, and instantly, with a farewell wave of his hand to his watching family, the missionary is off.

“ Marche ! Marche ! ” is now the stern command, and one dog-train after another is soon dashing along, eager, if possible, to keep the guide in sight. In a few minutes the Indian village, with its scores of friendly natives who have come out to the trail to say “ good-bye ” to the missionary and his companions, is left behind.

Now there is nothing before us for some days of hard travelling but the great primeval forests, broken by frozen lakes and rivers. We may possibly meet with some solitary hunters who are out trapping for the rich fur-bearing animals that are to be found in those vast, lonely places. No friendly settler at the door of his log cabin will open us a welcome refuge from the cold night storm, no cozy country inn with accommodation for man or beast is to be met with here.

But what care we? Our old, experienced guide carefully looked over the outfit as the sleds were packed, and he says there is everything necessary for a fine trip. With this assurance we may rest satisfied, for he makes but few, if any, mistakes.

How glorious the climate! How beautiful all nature looks in her deep covering of purest snow, bathed in the glorious sunshine! The air is so exhilarating that it seems a luxury to live, even if the temperature is forty degrees below zero.

Our dogs have settled down to their steady jog-trot, which they will keep up until the journey ends. Their loads are heavy now, but they are fat and eager. Every day will lessen the weight of the sleds, as we feed ourselves and our

dogs from the supplies they hold. "Don't run too much the first day or two," is the guide's command, and he considerately adds: "Your sled is less heavily loaded than the others, and you may jump on it and ride occasionally." This arrangement of riding when you are tired, and the jumping off and running when you feel chilly, is a capital one, and enables you to get over a good deal of ground in the course of the day.

"Look out for your nose and the small portions of your cheeks that your furs do not cover. There are some suspicious white spots amid the healthy red ones. Rub them well with the furry back of your big beaver mittens. There, they are all right again! Remember that in a temperature like this the exposed parts of the face are easily frost-bitten, unless hardened by many winters as are our faces," our splendid Indian companions remind and warn us.

Hungry! Well, it is no wonder, considering the way we have been travelling and the character of the climate. Nature knows best, when not perverted, and that craving for food is the call for fuel for the manufacture of more heat, for our safety, as well as comfort. But what is the matter with the dogs? Hold on to your end line, or your train will get away from you. See,

it is all right. The guide well knew it was time for the first meal, and there he is ahead of us with a splendid fire ready for the kettles. The dogs detected the fire before we did, and that was the reason why they so suddenly quickened their speed.

Now we are at the blazing fire in this spot where the guide has cleared away the snow with his snow-shoes, and with his axe, which he always carries in his belt, has cut down some of the plentiful supply of dry wood, which burns so brilliantly. The kettles are soon full of boiling water, made from the melting of the snow, which is so pure and abundant. We were amazed at first at the quantity of snow required to make a kettle of water. It is so light and dry that there is but little water in it. This is the reason why the blizzards of the land are so dangerous, as it is very easy for them, when raging, to lift up and fill the air with snow.

But dinner is ready, and as nobody stands on ceremony, we quickly seat ourselves on the fur robes which our attentive Indians have unpacked for us, and after asking heaven's blessing on our food, we very heartily partake of it. At first we thought it to be a little too heavy, and were fearful that we could not enjoy so much fat meat. In a few days, however, the fat meat is about all

we care for. Nature gives the craving for the food most serviceable, and that is the kind which furnishes most heat for these bodies of ours, which here must be kept working at high pressure.

Now we are off again, wonderfully refreshed by that hearty meal. We are fortunate to-day in having the trail made by some hunters who have but lately come in from their distant hunting grounds, situated about a hundred miles in the direction we are going. If no blizzard arrives, this means that we shall have a fairly good road for a couple of days. Another short stop for a rest and meal, and then on we go until the sun is sinking in the west and will in a half hour or so disappear behind the horizon.

We have not seen the guide for some time, but now our excited dogs are forgetting their weariness, and, to judge by their eager anxiety to get on, are surely on the lookout for him. Yes, there he is, and he is scanning the forest as he walks leisurely along. He stops at length and as we come up to him, says :

“Plenty travel for first day. We camp here.”

“What does he mean?” I ask, although he has, out of respect for us, used his best English.

Well, it means, I am told, that right here in the woods we are to spend the night. Here on

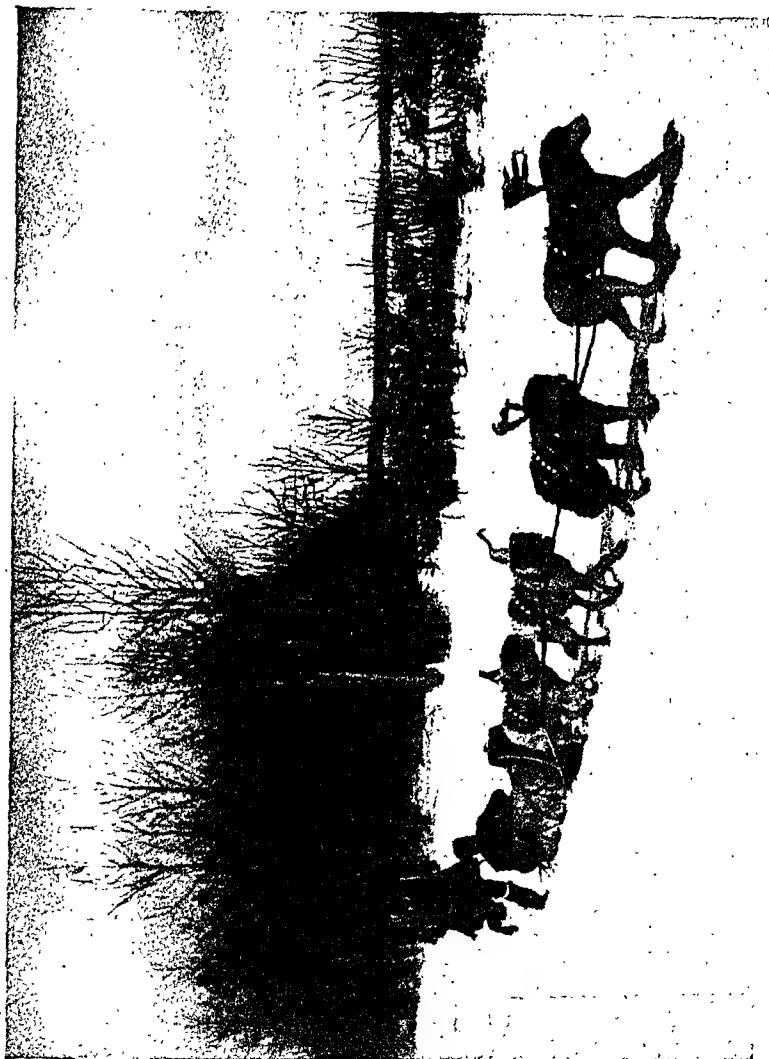
this very spot, where now the snow is over four feet on the level, we shall see one of the grandest of fires blazing, and close beside it will be arranged our camp, where, amid our fur robes and blankets, and surrounded by our Indians, we shall spend the night in comfort, even if our roof is the starry heavens.

But while we have been talking, see how all the rest of our party have gone to work. The first thing done after the camp was selected was to unharness the dogs. It may be necessary to tie up some cunning Eskimo dogs in order that they may be available in the morning, as some of them are so badly trained, or so inherently evil, that they occasionally skulk away in the dark forest and give endless trouble.

When all of this is attended to, each man seizes an axe and begins chopping down the dry trees, of which there are many close at hand. Indeed it was the sight of these dry trees that caused the guide to select this spot for the camp. We must have plenty of wood for the great fires. We notice that the guide has built a little fire, and that he is calling the men to come to it with their axes.

“What is that?” we ask.

It is to save the axe from breaking to pieces. So great is the power of the frost on the steel of



A DOG SLED AND A GOOD ROAD



the axe, that often in the hands of a powerful chopper, in the intense cold, as many as three axes in one evening have been broken in pieces as though made of glass.

For the first time to-day we now complain of the terrible cold. Well, it is little wonder, for the rims of our big fur cap and fur hood are completely covered with frost and rime. It is indeed fearfully cold, and as no supper will be ready until all the wood needed for the night is cut, the great fire made, the camp arranged and the dogs fed, we had better take an axe and show these Indians that we can handle it fairly well in cutting down trees.

The Indians surprise us by saying that a good sharp axe was put into our dog-sled specially for us. Yes, the guide knew that a little healthy exercise each evening while the camp was being prepared would do us good. There are no "dead heads" on these routes. Everybody is expected to do what he can. It helps things along and keeps everybody from freezing to death. So here goes, and we let the Indians see what we can do.

It is delightfully healthy work, and, too, it helps drive away those dangerous chills which were creeping down our back, in spite of the heavy clothing and big fur overcoat which we wear.

The guide has now selected the spot for the camp. It is the most level place he could find. Calling to his aid a couple of the Indians, they cleverly use their big snow-shoes as shovels to clean away the snow. They pile it up in great banks around the three sides. On the fourth side of the square, which is the one where the wind is blowing from the camp, they merely toss the snow a little to the right or left and trample it down. There the great logs are piled. The kindling is put under, the blaze is started, and soon there is a glorious log fire burning brilliantly.

Now that enough wood has been cut, we help to arrange our beds in the square hole, dug in the deep snow. We take our great rolls of blankets and fur robes from our sleds and pile them, for the present, back against the big snow wall farthest from the fire. A buffalo skin or two on the ground near the fire will suffice until after supper and prayers. Now our faithful dogs must be attended to. They have dragged their heavy loads and, for part of the way, us also, since the early starting, and yet have not had a mouthful to eat since last night.

We have had four or five meals since then, so it is no wonder that they are hungry. But do not imagine that we are treating them unkindly.

Dogs thrive better on only one meal a day. If we were to give them a good breakfast or a substantial dinner, they would be unfitted for doing efficient service. So, by long experience, it has been found that the best and in the end the kindest way, is to just give the dogs one good hearty meal a day, and that at the evening camp-fire when the day's work is done.

With this explanation, let us now, with the Indian dog-drivers, give them their supper, for which in their noisy way they are asking, as they well know it is their feeding-time. Thirty-two fish are required for our sixteen dogs. As they are frozen about as hard as rocks, it would be very cruel on our part to feed them to the dogs in this condition. They must be thawed out at the fire. None but the most careless, lazy dog-drivers neglect this work. Our own men attend to it. They roll a big log quite close to the roaring fire, and there against it they stand up the thirty-two fish.

When the fish begin to sizzle in the great heat, the dogs can hardly keep from quarrelling among themselves as they strive for the places nearest to their appetizing supper. Sometimes a couple of great fellows do attack each other, and then there is a big battle unless we can quickly stop it, as the three comrades of each fighting dog

rush to his assistance. A fight begun by two, generally ends in a battle royal, with four on a side.

It is interesting to notice, how the dogs that work together, in the same train, become so attached to each other that they are ever ready to fight together, against all others, even if some of those they fight are their own blood relations.

Now that peace reigns once more, and the fish are not only well thawed out, but about half cooked, let us go and help in the fun of feeding the dogs.

Each Indian driver is very jealous about his dogs. If we watch, we shall see how some of them, every night, try to secure the eight largest fish in the pile, for their own trains. The others, however, have something to say about it, and so as a general thing the arrangement reached is about right. Each train is fed separately, and so as some dogs can eat much more quickly than others the drivers have to be alert, or the more powerful dogs would steal from the weaker. To guard against such things and more especially against attacks from the big fellows of other trains, each dog driver has his heavy whip in his hand or belt, and woe to the invader who comes within range of that powerful, lead-loaded, sixteen-foot lash!

We have made casual allusions in several places in our story to the guides. These remarkable men deserve more than such slight reference to them. In the extraordinary ability they display, and the achievements they accomplish, they are worthy of our highest praise and admiration. All, even of the Indians, are not so fully gifted as ever to make efficient guides. Perhaps not one in twenty has the gift in full perfection. But those who have the marvellous accomplishment are worthy of a nation's esteem and honor.



CHAPTER SEVEN

Shoeing the Dogs

Dining under difficulties. Congenial companions. Evening prayers outdoors, even when fifty degrees below zero! The warm bed of robes and blankets. "Don't stir." What it means. The early call and hasty breakfast.



VII

SHOEING the dogs is quite a unique institution. Their feet suffer from various causes. Sometimes on the sharp, broken, or glare ice, the pads of the feet wear thin, and so become sore and bleed very much. Then again, in the hilly country where the blizzard winds have drifted the snow away into the valleys, often, in the rough places, the nails of the toes of the dogs get broken, or sharp points are driven through the webbing between the toes. In addition to these and similar accidents that occur from the wild, hard travelling, it sometimes happens that the dogs of civilization freeze their feet very badly.

Pure Eskimo dogs have harder, tougher feet than those of any other breed. To them accidents very rarely occur. With other dogs it is quite different, and so it is necessary for a travelling outfit like ours, to have included in it from a hundred to a hundred and fifty dog-shoes. These shoes are made out of a firmly woven English cloth of wool, and are like a mitten without the thumb.

At first the dogs decidedly object to being shod. They seem humiliated at having these clumsy-looking things on their feet. It is only for a little while, however, that they object to them or try, with their teeth, to tear them off.

Dogs are sagacious creatures, and it is not long before they realize how comfortable their poor wounded feet are in these warm, woollen shoes. When this knowledge has once been gained, their constant efforts are being put forth to induce their masters to put them on. They will pretend that their feet are very sore or frozen, when really there is nothing wrong with them. They will sometimes, in the night, try to pull the covering off the bed of the sleepers in the camp, to induce them to get up and put shoes on them.

The two big pots on the fire have been engaging the attention of the guide and another Indian, and now they tell us their supper is cooked.

A large tanned deerskin serves as a table-cloth when we have no better. This is spread on the ground in the camp, as close to the fire as it is possible for us to endure the heat. On this table cloth are arranged our plates, knives, forks and cups. Then each settles down on the robe seat at the place assigned him, and the hot meat and boiling tea, with whatever else our

sleds can supply, are placed before us. We invoke heaven's blessing on our food and then we all, with splendid appetites, begin our evening meal.

The cold is so intense that we dare not remove our caps or gloves, or we should soon suffer even while we were so near the fire. Then, the metal handles of our knives and forks, even if almost hot when we begin, would soon be too cold to be handled by the naked hand with safety. We are surprised at the quantity of fat meat and the heartiest of food that we readily consume. But the order is "eat away; fill up the furnace, and you will get through the long cold night the better."

The food used by myself and men, was, of course, in some measure dependent on what we could secure from the hunters, and also in the supplies we were able to import from the outside world. But in our earlier years these latter supplies were not many, on account of the distance and expense of transportation. The flourishing city of Winnipeg was then non-existent, and St. Paul in Minnesota was our nearest market town. To it supplies came by the long trains of Red River ox carts. Once a year they would come by way of Hudson Bay and York Factory, across the Atlantic from England,

and then be carried by the Indian boatmen some hundreds of miles into the interior. The result was, in any case, the cost of supplies from the outside world was so great that we were obliged to live on the products of the country. The last great herds of buffalo were not destroyed as yet on the plains, so for a year or two we saw the wharves at the Norway House trading post loaded down with great bags of pemmican. Some of this we were able to buy as long as it lasted, and on it my guide and dog drivers fared sumptuously. When it was all gone and no more could be obtained and I had to import and give them flour and pork as a substitute, they mourned over the change of diet and sighed for the pemmican and dried meat of the buffalo, gone now, alas, never to return.

I must confess I never had much of a liking for the pemmican. It was so hard that an axe was the best implement with which to cut it, yet my Indians would, with their great strong brilliant white teeth, attack it with great delight and consume great quantities of it, washing it down with many cups of strong black tea. Neither my teeth, nor those of my wife, seemed able to grapple with it in its crude state. So, rather than starve when we had nothing else, it was softened and cooked like a kind of hash.

We survived on it but it was generally so strong, or high, in its flavor, that neither of us were sorry when we heard the Saskatchewan boatmen say to the officers of the Norway House Fort:—“ We will never bring you any more great boat-loads of pemmican.”

We were generally called by the guide at three o’clock each morning. The nights were sometimes so bitterly cold that the fire was kept burning, and so then it was not difficult to prepare the early breakfast.

“ Eat plenty ! ” says Tom, “ for we have the long traverse ere we get our next meal.”

This “ eat plenty,” is sometimes easier said than done. With my Indian men there was never any trouble in carrying out the command, but I must confess there were times when I begged off, even if earnestly pressed by the good-hearted men.

To a person accustomed to the ordinary diet of civilization, to be routed out of a camp bed in the snow when it seemed that he had only got really warm and comfortable, and was in his first dreamless refreshing sleep, is, to say the least, a trial of the flesh. Then to find that the temperature outside of his warm bed is anywhere between forty and sixty below zero and this he has to face while he is preparing for

breakfast makes him step around lively and be on the lookout for frost bites.

Tom, the guide, who is a bit of a wag, as well as the morning cook, facetiously inquires:—

“What will you have to-day, sir? Saskatchewan pemmican or Chicago pork?”

As one is hard and rancid and smells like decayed soap grease, and the other is in chunks, four inches square, of solid fat without a streak of lean in it, it is often hard to make a choice and so, if we dared, we would gladly refuse both. But the importunate: “You must eat plenty, sir,” of your Indian comrades, who know what they are talking about, constrains you to force down with cups of strong tea, the not very dainty food. To start off on some of these long runs which were before us on many a cold wintry day without a good meal of nourishing food, was to run a great risk of perishing. The furnace must be kept well supplied with that which furnishes the greatest quantity of heat, and so the fatter the food, the better, even if it was far from being agreeable to the appetite. Fortunately this forcing oneself to eat did not bring on indigestion, dyspepsia, or any kindred ill.

And when the question was again laughingly asked: “Pemmican or pork?” the likely reply was, “a goodly quantity of both.”

It is impressive to worship God out here in the woods amidst such strange surroundings. There are no human beings nearer us than the loved ones we parted from this morning, and they are now fifty miles away. The Indians, who have done everything that is essential for our comfort and safety during the night, have come into the camp and say they are ready for prayers, so we will hold our evening service.

Indians are called reserved and stoical, but our companions are a happy, joyous lot of men. There are no sullen, sulky ones among them. They are good Christians, and I have tried to teach them that they ought to be the happiest of men. Children of the King and heirs of a blissful immortality, why should they be otherwise than happy? So I encourage them to be joyous and bright, and to say all the pleasant things they can, and to laugh themselves and to make the rest of us laugh as much as possible. We need it all to help keep up our courage, for many are our trials, and fierce at times are the battles we have to wage against the hardships of these long, cold journeys. But when we say: "Let us worship God," all the fun and pleasantries cease, and reverently and devoutly they seat themselves near us. No matter how terrible the cold, they reverently uncover their heads, and

nothing can induce them to put on their caps, although I should have perished if I had tried to imitate them in this respect.

What shall we sing? There is nothing better than that grand old hymn:

“Glory to Thee, my God, this night,
For all the blessings of the light;
Keep me, oh, keep me, King of kings,
Beneath Thine own Almighty wings.”

My Indian companions were generally good singers. In fact it is a qualification which I sought in the dog-drivers which I selected. The Indians have no native music that amounts to much, but they quickly pick up our tunes and sing them very sweetly.

The hundred and third Psalm and the fourteenth chapter of St. John are favorite camp-fire chapters. Our dusky companions have their own Bibles and hymn-books with them, which are printed in the beautiful Syllabic characters. Our converted Indians very seldom leave the books behind them when on their summer and winter trips. Since we have the long evening, and the men are not so tired as they will be some days later on, and this is the night of our prayer service at the distant Indian church, we will hold a little service of our own out here in

the great wild forest. How sweet the promise, "Lo, I am with you alway even unto the end of the world," which comes to us at such times and places as these. How blessed was our service! Every Indian in our party led in prayer. As these petitions were offered up in their own language, we were touched at hearing how very kindly and lovingly they asked God's blessing and preserving care to rest on the loved ones far away in the village and mission homes, and also upon each of us who, here with them, were making this journey for the purpose of doing good.

"Missionary, if you will get ready for bed, we will make your bed ready for you, and then tuck you in."

That is what the guide has just said to me. It sounds rather funny, does it not, to hear this big Indian gravely talking of "tucking" into bed, as though I were a little laddie three or four years old? But it is all right, as we shall speedily find out.

It does seem a pity to have to leave this glorious fire and be tucked in under our fur robes, so we will ask the guide to give us another half hour to enjoy this calm, quiet, brilliant night, where we are so cozy, even if a few feet away it is forty or fifty degrees below zero.

Very cheerfully he complies with our request, for these Indians are the kindest and most obliging of men, and to make our half hour more pleasant, he piles on the fire some great, dry spruce logs. The sparks that fly up in multitudes have remarkably long tails. Whether this is because of the cold or from the character of the wood, I do not know.

But our half hour is up, and now for bed. We do not take off any garments here when making preparations for our night's rest.

The only disrobing that I did was to unbutton my shirt collar. It is difficult to sleep well if the neck is tightly bandaged. I then pull on the long buffalo skin boots, fur side out. You cannot improve on Nature. The big ear-laps of my fur cap are tied down, and then I pull up and fasten the big fur hood of my warm blanket coat which I wear over all of the clothes that I have been able to put on. Thus are we rigged out so as to have some hours of refreshing sleep, here in this wintry, forest camp. Now the guide says:

“Your bed is ready for you, and if you will get down into it I will cover you up and tuck you in.”

As quickly as we can, we get down and roll into position in our bed. We find that the In-

dians have spread out a heavy fur robe and a big Hudson's Bay blanket under us. As about a foot of snow was left on the ground, it evens off the rough places and fills up the hollows, and so makes a very comfortable bed.

Melt? Not a bit of it. There is too much frost around for the warmth of our bodies to get near it, and so it will be just as dry in the morning as it is now.

"Now, guide, on with your coverings."

First a couple of warm blankets, and then a great fur robe are spread over us, and at once the "tucking in" begins.

Beginning at my feet, the guide tucks in the warm blankets and robes around me. There is nothing rough or careless about his movements, yet everything is done most thoroughly. He ends by throwing the ends of the blankets over my head and packs them down under my shoulders. Smother! Well I thought I should at first, and threw the blankets off telling the guide I needed fresh air. He only laughed at me and said that I would not smother, that the Indians sleep with their heads covered up, and so do all people who live out in such cold countries. Then with a serious look he said that I must keep my face covered or else I would freeze.

I used to crook my arms and keep them up

over my face so as to have more air, and room enough to turn that bit of air around."

The guide's last warning is: "Don't stir." This means that until we get up in the morning we are to try to remain in exactly the same position in which we were, when so thoroughly tucked in by the guide.

"Oh, but I like to turn over two or three times in the night."

"Well, please do not try it here," the Indian warningly says.

"Why?"

"So long as you keep quiet and do not stir, you will be warm and comfortable, but if you stir and move around and get the clothing loose, you may let the cold air in, and freeze to death without awakening."

We have some other friends—and warm and shaggy they are—that will add much to our comfort. Jack and Cuffy, my two favorite dogs, have been resting on a buffalo robe all the evening, instead of curling down in beds in the snow like the native dogs. They have only been waiting until we are well tucked in, and now, here they come and cuddle down as close to us as possible. They are capital bedfellows, and their great warm bodies against our outer fur garments, are heavy weights to keep them

down, as well as to add to our comfort by the additional warmth. I used to allow some of my Eskimo dogs to huddle around me, but they were so jealous and quarrelsome that I dispensed with their company after having been several times aroused by finding them fighting for what seemed to be the honor of sleeping on my head!

Good-night, and pleasant dreams!—or rather, what is better, dreamless sleep.

“What is that? Why are the Indians all up and talking so excitedly to each other?”

The sharp ears of the guide heard the distant howlings of a gray wolf. He at once called up the other Indians. Fortunately there was enough wood cut for an all-night fire. They brought in from the sleds their guns and loaded them with bullets, then waited.

As there was no response from other wolves to this one, that howled out his weird, dismal notes, they concluded that it was only a solitary old fellow prowling around and not much to be feared. So, with one man on guard, they have wrapped themselves in their rabbit-skin robes and are now again fast asleep. And we imitate their good example.

Snowing in the night! Yes, furiously, and there is over a foot of it on the top of our bed. Don’t stir, say the Indians, who are up and with

their snow-shoes are throwing out of the camp all the snow they can. But it seems to come down about as fast as they remove it.

As we are so cozy, covered up by our robes and blankets, perhaps we had better stay here until breakfast is ready.

“What time is it?”

Oh, quite early—not four o’clock yet. The guide says that we must make a long day’s journey before we camp to-night, so we must be away from here by five o’clock at the latest.

Now spring up! Throw your outer robes and blankets off with a sudden effort, or you will get in your face some of the snowdrift that is on you. Shake yourself well and throw that robe around you as the Indians do their blankets, and come and sit down here as close to the fire as possible without burning. It is not so comfortable and cozy as it was last night, now that the snow-storm is raging. But we have to expect some storms and blizzards in this land. We do not enjoy our breakfast. It is trying to have to eat out in a snow-storm, with no roof over us and the fire in danger of being smothered by the snow.

“Some snow has got down my neck.”

“I am very sorry for that. You should not have let your hood fall down. It is really dangerous to let such things happen.”

"Can we not have a wash this morning?"

Washing here is one of the lost arts. You can have a dry rub with a towel, but beyond that it is not safe to go. I once tried the methods of civilization and suffered for many weeks after. It is dangerous to apply water to either the face or the hands out where the mercury is frozen for weeks at a time.

"This is really dreadful! I wonder if the people at home have any idea of what some of the missionaries have to suffer to carry the glad tidings of salvation to the poor wanderers who are as the lost sheep in the wilderness."

Oh, you have seen and suffered but little thus far. Wait until a real blizzard catches you out on some great lake, where for hours and hours you are at the mercy of that most dreaded and treacherous of all storms. Wait until the travelling becomes so difficult that your poor, tired dogs have all they can do to pull the sleds, and so you have to trudge along until every bone and muscle seems full of pain, while your feet are so wounded and bleeding that life seems a prolonged agony. Yet with set teeth and frozen face you must rush on and on for days, while the trail is marked by the blood that finds its way through stockings, moccasins and snow-shoes.



CHAPTER EIGHT

The Famous Indian Guides

Able to travel independent of sun, stars, or trail. Night travelling.
Light and shadows. A laughable incident. The missionary's
plunge in the snowdrift. The glorious auroras.



VIII

TO understand intelligently the wonderful achievements of the guides of the North-land we must have in mind a fairly good idea of the vastness and the character of the country through which, with such accuracy and speed, they are able to lead the parties committed to their care. Two hundred miles, through an unsurveyed, trackless, primitive forest, seems, and is, a long distance ; but when that is doubled or extended to a thousand miles, we have to confess that we are face to face with a problem beyond solution by the ordinary mind. And yet it is well known that there are, and were, as old men still surviving will testify, guides who could without mistake or hesitancy take the despatches of the Hudson's Bay Company from York Factory to the Rocky Mountains, or from Norway House to the Mackenzie River.

My longest single trip was over three hundred and fifty miles. It was through a pathless region of the wildest description. We met on the whole route only two small bands of Indians.

Yet my guide never hesitated, but pushed on and on, as accurately as though he were travelling on a well-defined highway. Explain it as we may, we cannot but admit that these men are gifted with some intuitive perception not granted to the majority of people. We have read wonderful things about them, much that seemed almost incredible, and yet unhesitatingly I here state that after being in the field, witnessing as I did so many practical illustrations of their extraordinary abilities, I can endorse, all the high encomiums that have been written about them.

Men who for hundreds of miles could find their way through trackless forests, no matter how great their density or gloom, must command our admiration. Sunshine or clouds, calm or storm, sultry heat or intense cold, made not the slightest impression upon them. The best guides were men of great equanimity. There was always an evenness of mind that nothing could upset. If well supplied with rations, and their pay assured, no complaints or grumblings were ever heard from them. Once informed of what was expected of them, they wasted no time on the trail, and no matter how remote the out station or post, be it two, or five, hundred miles distant, they conscientiously and thoroughly

carried out their contract. It was inexplicable to watch them, as with perfect confidence they guided us on, as well when the skies were covered with dull leaden clouds—and to me it was impossible to tell north from south without a compass, as they did when the skies were bright and cloudless.

Sometimes, prompted by curiosity, and perhaps admiration for some clever feat, I tried to find out if there was any secret formula by which they accomplished such splendid results; but about the only answer I ever received was a look of good-natured surprise that I should think that anything they could do was more than the ordinary occurrence of life. But if I was in ignorance of how they did it, I was for years the fortunate observer and fellow traveller of numbers of these guides who could not only in the daytime, but, what was more wonderful, could travel with the same unerring accuracy by night.

Of course, when the stars were shining with all their wondrous brilliancy, so characteristic of the majority of those wintry, northern nights, we could understand or imagine that by them our guides were shaping their course. Yet as we travelled, night after night, from sundown to sunrise, there were times when neither star nor flashing auroras were visible. Clouds were

above us everywhere, and the only reason why we were not shrouded in dense darkness, was the fact that the whole ground was covered with snow, and, in purest white, it hung on every tree and mantled every rock. Snow in such abundance and purity seems to have the power of dissipating the inky darkness, or of giving out a glimmering light. In the dense forest, this light was very little, yet it was sufficient for our guide, who, with confidence and accuracy, strode on through the gloom without ever being puzzled or at fault.

The question naturally arises, Why this night travelling? Surely there was sufficient time, considering the early hour in the morning when the breakfast had been eaten at the distant camp-fire, for all that should reasonably be asked of men and dogs ere, at the close of the day, the guide had selected the next camping-place! The reason why we and so many others did our travelling by night was on account of that painful disease, called snow-blindness. It is caused by the dazzling rays of the sun shining upon the brilliant snow. The first sensation of the coming of an attack was excessive weeping. Tears flowed like rain. The next sensation was intense agony as though caused by red hot sand thrown into the eyes. Then if the disease was

not speedily checked, total blindness soon followed. Two different winters I suffered from it and it was months before I fully recovered. Goggles and other kinds of sun glasses afford but poor protection.

It is feared and dreaded by whites, Indians and Eskimo alike as the most terrible of the scourges of the Northland and to escape from its attacks and sufferings, my men and I were obliged, some weeks every year, to make most of our journeys by night. On one long trip our splendid guide led us on for nine consecutive nights, from sundown to sunrise, without a single miscalculation or error in the route. Some of these night runs were through the forests. Our progress then was necessarily slow. When we had the great ice-covered lake over which to travel, we sometimes made as much as seventy miles in a night. When on those long lake stretches, the guide, wherever possible, led us on so that at least twice during the night we could strike some point of headland where wood could be found in quantities by which a meal could be quickly prepared. With such appetites as that rapid travelling gave us, the meal was much enjoyed, even if it were amid the snow-drifts, out under the stars, and with the mercury frozen. But—with all his alertness—it was not

possible to find what did not exist, and so there were some cold—yes, bitterly cold—nights, when it seemed as though we must perish ere the long hours of darkness passed, when, without fire or shelter, all that we could do was to gnaw a meal off of our frozen food and to rush on.

For days together there was not the least vestige of a trail, or other sign visible to inexperienced eyes, to indicate the right direction, but to the guide's keen vision the whole route was as clearly marked out as a well-beaten road. When going on a long trip of four to six weeks I generally took with me four trains of dogs. This meant in addition to the guide, three dog-drivers. After the first winter I generally drove one of the trains myself. So, as there were the guide, three dog-drivers, and the missionary, as well as sixteen dogs to feed, the first question in packing our load was, How much food do we require for this long journey? We could not, as in summer, depend much upon our guns. The bear and beavers were all denned up. Ducks and geese were away off in their sunny homes in the Southland. Fish were under the ice, that was from four to ten feet thick. So our sleds had to hold, and our dogs had to draw, sufficient nutritious food to last until we returned, or at least to keep us alive until we

could reach some Indian village or Hudson's Bay Company's trading post, where we could replenish our supplies.

We found it never safe to depend on getting supplies from pagan Indians. They might be able to furnish us with fish for our dogs, but unless they had had the good fortune to kill a moose or deer just at the time of our arrival, we usually found them in such a condition of semi-starvation that out of sympathy we shared with them our not over-abundant supply, and suffered accordingly, ere we reached some friendly post of the traders, who would generally sell us something that enabled us to continue our journey.

It was interesting to see how cleverly and safely all the necessary things were packed in the well-tanned deerskin wrappings on the four dog-sleds. There was quite a knack in doing it, and, as I never acquired the art, I always left to the more experienced guide not only the duty of seeing that everything essential for the journey was secured ere we left, but also the careful packing of the loads.

The necessity of thus well securing the load will be understood when it is remembered that the sleds were only eighteen inches wide, and often piled over three feet high. So rough and

uneven was the route that even with the greatest care many were the upsets that took place. Besides, in the broken, hilly country, it was no uncommon thing for dogs and sleds to go tumbling down the steep ravines or hillsides, often into deep snowdrifts scores or even hundreds of feet below. Yet the load had been so well built up and fastened on, that seldom was it even disarranged, or was anything found to be missing when the day's journey ended.

A laughable incident occurred on one of these journeys, in which my mishap afforded amusement to a brother missionary who was my fellow traveller in this trip, as well as to the Indians of our party.

My sled, as usual, was well packed and, as the travelling was not very heavy, I frequently jumped upon my load and rode, where the snow was not deep and my dogs had no trouble in getting along. Suddenly we came to the top of a long, steep hill which ends in what the Indians call the Wolf's Cove.

The reason the snow was so thin on the exposed high parts, was because the winds had carried it all down into the ravines and valleys. How much there was in one of these ravines I was soon to know. As the tracks of the guide's snow-shoes were plainly visible on the hill, my

dogs, which were in the lead, followed directly in them. On and on we went until we began the rapid descent. As we dashed down, I heard the warning cries of my men behind me, but it was too late. With increasing momentum on we went, until, in spite of the speed of the dogs, the heavy sled went over them, dragging them and me down into the heavy drifts below. As I disappeared, head first, in the deep snow, the last sound I heard was the merry laughter of my travelling companions who had wisely halted their dog-trains on the top of the hill.

They say that they had to drag me out by the heels, and that for some time after I was a little more cautious in my adventurous dog-travelling journeys.

To the traveller, when storms are not raging or clouds darkening the heavens, there are often night visions of splendor and magnificence that compensate him for many of his privations, and that give him glimpses into the wonders and glories of the Creator's works, that will abide with him forever.

As every particle of moisture is frozen and fallen out of the sky, the stars shine with a splendor and vividness unknown in more southern lands. If the moon happens to be shining, it casts a quite distinct shadow at

times. The planets appear in the same vivid distinctness as when seen through good telescopes in other countries. Meteors appear to be much more frequent than in other places, and for a much longer period the line of fiery light they leave remains visible in the heavens.

But the glory of that land of night visions of beauty is the Northern Lights, the aurora borealis. Hardly a winter night passes but there is a greater or less display, as they illumine our quiet trail and make us forget our many sufferings. We never weary of gazing upon their flitting, ever-changing glories. Expecting that the next shifting of the scene will, if possible, give a vision more glorious than that which has preceded it, we are kept eagerly on the *qui vive* for what we feel sure will follow.

This sudden transition from "glory to glory" of these mysterious visitants is one of their greatest charms. They are never twice alike, although there are well defined classes into which learned men have divided them. For example, some are called the rainbow aurora, because they assume the arch-like form. Then there are the canopy, or umbrella, auroras, because of their resemblance to these things. Some bear such wonderful likeness to great armies marching and countermarching on ghostly

battle-fields, retreating and advancing, now in the flash of decisive victory, and now torn and shattered by defeat, that they might justly be styled militant auroras.

Thus amid these beautiful night visions, varied at times by awful blizzard storms, when death seemed close at hand to overwhelm us and the very limit of physical endurance seemed to have been reached, we travelled on, night after night, led by the well-experienced guide.

If at times under the terrible sufferings endured our flesh recoiled from the agonies, and we said in our thoughtlessness, "these hardships are more than we are called upon to bear, and we will make this our last trip of the kind," we forgot all about it in the warm welcome we received from those to whom we had gone to minister the Word of Life. The joy with which they received us and the eagerness with which they listened to and accepted the gospel of the Son of God, and the beautiful and consistent lives those Indian converts led, made all the physical hardships endured seem as trifles by way of contrast.

Thus in the triumphs of the work were we more than repaid for all its hardships.



CHAPTER NINE

Indian Boys and Girls at School

Odd costumes of the youngsters in early days. Early in attendance at the warm church—opening services. Happy in their poverty. No word for bread—often hungry. "The best little girl." The killing of the robin for food. A pathetic story.



IX

IN winter the cold is terrible, and the Frost King reigns in despotic power, yet the children always come to the Indian Sunday-school.

The school is supposed to meet every Sunday morning at nine o'clock, but some of the boys and girls come to the church at seven, or even earlier. The reason why they come so early is because the church is warm and comfortable, while the wigwam habitations and other dwelling places are cold and miserable. Faithful old Oig, the church keeper, has spent most of the previous night in the church, where he has been busily engaged in keeping up roaring fires in the two large stoves, that the house of the Lord may be warm and comfortable for the services which are there to be held. The boys and girls all know this and gladly avail themselves of the welcome which they know the dear old man will have for them, so they hurry away to the church and cuddle down on the floor around the great warm fires.

It is delightful to see how soon the cold,

pinched looks give place to contentment and happiness, and then to hear the quiet, grateful words of the children, that they have the big church, and that Oig has it so nice and warm for them. As later arrivals come in, they are welcomed by those who have preceded them and are at once given the warmest places. Thus until the hour for opening the school arrives, there they sit, or stand, happy to be in the genial warmth, away from the bitter cold.

In our Indian Sunday-school in those days, not a word of English was heard, and the boys and girls were so shy and quiet that not a loud word was spoken, or the first sign of a quarrel seen.

The garments of the children, in many instances, surprise and amuse us. Those who belong to families where the parents have for some time past been Christians, are now mostly dressed in the clothing of civilization. But there are here gathered some who are still wholly or partially arrayed in native costume. Some garments are of deerskin, beautifully adorned with fringe and porcupine work. On other suits it is easy to see that loving mothers have spent long weeks in the elaborate bead-work and silk embroidery, which are so skillfully arranged. Others, however, are of the

coarsest reindeer skins, poorly tanned by careless, lazy mothers, and put together so roughly that we feel sorry for the fine little boys who have to wear such badly fitting clothes.

Some have on queer suits that are a combination of deerskin, rabbits' skins and cloth, with perhaps a pair of leggings made of muskrat skins. The caps of the boys are principally made of furs, but a few have most beautiful ones from the feathered breasts of the loon, the great Northern diver.

There was one comical little boy who had on a cloth suit that very much interested us. He was a stout, happy little fellow, and for some weeks came to Sunday-school wearing a suit of clothes so large that we could not understand the mystery, until we found out that the one in which the short, fat lad came to school at nine o'clock, was the same which his long, tall father had on when he walked in to the eleven o'clock service. The sleeves of the coat were so long for the boy that they had to be turned back and pinned at the shoulders. The legs of the trousers were turned up and fastened at his hips, and the coat tails seemed, in some way, to be laid in folds at the back.

But comical as he looked, he seemed to be happy and comfortable, and nobody laughed at

him, or indeed at any one else, no matter how absurd or ridiculous was his dress. The instant the school was closed, away hurried the fat little boy to his home. Here the clothes were exchanged for a little deerskin, every-day suit, while the tall father at once arrayed himself in the store clothes.

The most peculiar feature about the feminine apparel was the great blanket which each one wore. It was amusing to watch the girls' efforts to keep their faces hidden, with only one eye visible, while in many cases the girl was so small and the blanket so large, that much of it was trailing in the snow or on the floor of the church.

At nine o'clock we opened the school. At first I had to arrange all present in three classes, as that was the number of teachers we could muster. Mrs. Young had charge of the infant class, which consisted of all under the age of eight or ten years. Badger, our day school teacher, had the intermediate pupils, including all above the infant class up to the age of sixteen years. The others who came were assigned to my care. Many of the older people would at times come in, and often they would get out their flint and steel, strike a light, and have a good smoke out of their long pipes, while listening to the lesson for the day.

The hymns sung were in the Indians' own tongue. The Cree is a soft, sweet, musical language, very different from some others, which are harsh and guttural. A favorite hymn in those days, and one still loved, although hundreds of others have since been translated into their language, was :

Jesus ne te-ta ye moo-win,
Ispe-mik Kah-ke-e-to-tate ;
We-yah piko ne mah-me-sin
Nes-ta-ka ke-e-to ta-yan.

In English this is :

“Jesus, my all, to heaven is gone,
He whom I fix my hopes upon ;
His trail I see, and I'll pursue
The narrow way till Him I view.”

They were so fond of singing that we often had several of these sweet hymns. Their voices were sweet and plaintive and generally good ; but many were so shy and so timid that it was difficult to find out how much they really could sing.

We concluded the opening prayer by all repeating the Lord's Prayer. The translation of one petition in it very much interested me. The English prayer, “Give us this day our daily

bread," in Indian is, "Me-yah-nan a-nooch ka-ke-see-kak ka-ooche pi-ma-tisseyak." This literally means: "Give us this day something to keep us in life."

The word "bread," as popularly understood by us, is not used at all by them. In the early days, and indeed up to a short time ago, those Northern Indians had no agricultural pursuits and so knew nothing of wheat or any other kind of grain. So as the word "bread" was unknown, the translators wisely rendered the prayer as we have given it.

We found, often by bitter experience, that hunting and fishing were very uncertain methods of obtaining regular and sufficient supplies of food. It was generally a feast or a famine. When the herds of reindeer were numerous there was abundance. This was also the case in the spring and fall of the year when the fish, in great numbers, could easily be caught. At such times even the Indian dogs were fat and good-natured. But there were other seasons when the game was scarce and the fish had hidden themselves away in the deep, cold waters of the great lakes. Then there was keen suffering, and although the stern, stoical nature of the Indians kept them from referring to their hunger and want of food, their sunken faces and gaunt forms

eloquently told the sad story. Even the children were easily trained to go for days without complaining, when the nets failed to secure the fish, or father's gun did not succeed in bringing down the hunted deer.

"That is my best little girl," said an Indian father to me one day, as he pointed to a sweet little child who was playing with a doll and quaint little native cradle on the floor.

"Why should she be your favorite child?" I asked.

"For a very good reason," he replied. "Of all the children I have, she will go the longest without food and never cry."

Is it any wonder, then, that, as we looked over the little company of boys and girls gathered in our Sunday-school, we were glad and thankful when their plump, full faces told us there was plenty of food among them? Perhaps it was because of the many times when they were so hungry, that that petition in the prayer seemed so expressive, and we breathed it up more earnestly than we had been accustomed to do in other lands, where hunger is but little known.

Various were the clever expedients to secure even a little food to lessen the pangs of hunger. The boys were early trained as hunters, and even the girls were not far behind them. They could

make clever snares in which to capture rabbits, partridges and other small game.

The following incident will show not only the straits to which the Indians were at times reduced, but will also throw light on some phases of the life of these people.

One beautiful day towards the end of May, as we were sitting at our table, Mrs. Young and I were delighted to hear the song of a robin, just outside of the open window.

For at least seven long months we had not heard the song of a bird. The previous September, they had all flitted away to the sunny Southland, where the warm sunshine abounded and where no chilly winds ever blew. Now, however, with the blessed spring-time, they were coming back, and here on the branch of a tree, near our open window, this beautiful redbreast perched himself for a time and in joyous strains literally flooded our rooms with his melody. As we listened with great delight to this first glad spring song, we said, in quiet tones so as not to disturb him, "This sweet song seems like a message of cheer and gladness from our friends three thousand miles away. Who knows but in coming up from still further South, this robin called at our homes and gave them a song in which he tried to let them know that he was on

his way to tell us to rejoice that the long, cold winter was over, and that "the time of the singing of birds" had come?

But very abruptly indeed was this sweet song of the robin, and our reveries which it suggested, brought to an end. For suddenly there flew by the open window an Indian arrow sent with deadly accuracy, and our sweet songster, pierced by its sharp point, fell noiseless but quivering to the ground.

Springing up I rushed to the window, and there saw outside, but a few feet from me, the young Indian hunter whose deadly aim had so quickly destroyed our songster and thus forever ended his song.

Angry and indignant at the death of this beautiful bird, I was not slow in telling the boy how grieved and hurt I was at his wanton cruelty in destroying this robin whose song had given us such delight. I gave him quite a lecture on the sin of killing these beautiful birds that were, in so many ways, a blessing.

With an Indian's stoical nature, the boy remained in exactly the same position; with his bow in one hand and the fingers of the other on the string, during all the time I was pouring upon him the words of my protest against his

cruel deed. His fine black eyes looked straight into mine with fearless confidence, while not a muscle quivered or a limb moved.

Not until it was evident to him that I was through with my protest, did he condescend to say a word. Then in a slow, deliberate, but perfectly respectful way, he began his reply, and it was to this effect :

“ Missionary, we have nothing to eat at our home. Father took his gun and went off three days ago to try to shoot a deer, that we all might have some food. When he came home last night without anything, he told us that when he had crawled up close enough to the deer to shoot it, he failed, because his old gun, a flintlock, only flashed in the pan. The noise it made caused the deer to run away, and father could not get a chance at any other. So we are all very hungry. This morning, mother said to me, ‘ Willie, if you do not want to go to school hungry, you will have to go out and shoot some birds that have come with the warm south winds.’ So I took my bow and arrows and am doing as my mother told me, for it is very hard to study my lessons when I am hungry.”

Saying this, the sturdy little fellow picked up the dead bird and arrow and marched off with the air of a conqueror.

Seeing I had been too severe on the boy for killing the robin, I said to my wife :

"I will go over to Willie's home and see if he has told me the truth, and if there is this excuse for the killing of even robins."

I knew where he lived, and so after breakfast and prayers, I sauntered over to his home and entered. The first object that attracted my attention was Willie busily engaged in cooking his breakfast, which consisted of several birds, among them being the robin that so lately had delighted us with his song.

The little fellow had the birds picked and cleaned and two or three of them were skidded on the sharp end of a stick, which was about as long as an ordinary cane. Firmly gripping the other end, Willie kept turning the birds around above a hot fire which was burning on the ground.

Not seeming to notice him, I went over to the other side of the fire and began talking to his father, who was seated there. From him I learned his story exactly as Willie had given it to me.

While respectfully listening to the father I kept my eyes on the boy.

"There is Willie," said the father, apparently noticing the direction of my eyes; "his mother

said to him that if he did not want to go to school hungry, he had better go and shoot some birds. This he did; and now you see he is cooking them."

By this time Willie had his birds cooked to suit him. It did not take him long to eat them. He needed no knife, or fork, or plate. His clever fingers and strong teeth were quite sufficient for all carving purposes. Speedily were they all devoured, with the exception of a few of the large bones. Then after rubbing his greasy mouth on the sleeve of his leather coat, he seized his cap and was soon off to join his schoolmates:

As I walked back to my home I had to confess that I had made a mistake in severely scolding a lad for killing a singing bird. So, more than ever, I pitied the condition of these poor Indians, who were often so hungry and destitute of many of the comforts of life, even of bread, that their prayer was, as we have said :

"Give us this day something to keep us in life."

Willie and I after a while got to understand each other and became good friends. He was fond of both the day school and Sunday-school, and as I heard him repeating the Lord's Prayer, I often used to think of that day when

he killed the robin so that he would not have to go to school hungry.

Owing to the uncertainty of the food supply, our hearts were often filled with sadness at the hunger of the people, and our supplies were taxed to the uttermost to alleviate their needs, especially those of the little ones. It was often necessary to take some of the poor, pinched, hungry ones into our home and give them something to eat ere we could open our Sunday-school.

A homely illustration will give some idea of how every article of food was utilized. The economical, practical wife of the missionary was justly grieved at the high price she had to pay for soap of the commonest kind. This great cost was due to the expense of carrying such a heavy article as a box of soap into the interior. So, to save many dollars that she thought could be more wisely spent, she resolved to keep all the waste fat and oil and bones, and then in due time manufacture a quantity of soft soap, or even, by the liberal use of salt, make it into a passable kind of hard soap which would serve for all the coarser work.

Most energetically and systematically did she begin her work, but it never came to soap-boiling time, for such was the hunger of the poor

Indians that every bone was utilized in soup, and every scrap of fat meat or oil was speedily devoured.

This was a condition of things that was unendurable and so—now that the great majority of the people had become Christians and both fish and game were far less plentiful than in previous years—the great question was, What can be done to improve their temporal condition so that these periodical times of semi-starvation, alas, so frequent, will become only sad memories of the past?

Some worthy efforts had been made by energetic missionaries at various places, but these, in many cases, had not been carefully followed up. At other places nothing had as yet been done, but of our primitive efforts and of our successes and failures, I will write later.

With the marvellous development and growth of Manitoba and other provinces, the temporal condition of the Indians has greatly improved. There is plenty of work now for all the men, and with the habits of industry to which many of the young are being trained in the Industrial Schools and elsewhere, there is now but little reason for any to suffer want, unless it be those who are still in the far off regions remote from civilization.

CHAPTER TEN

The Old Indian in the Infant Class

More about the Indian Sunday-school. The old heathen Indian who smoked his pipe while the missionary preached. Attended the Sunday-school, but would stay in the infant class. His reasons. His pathetic words. His mysterious end.



X

IN our last chapter we were describing one of our Indian Sunday-schools. The story of the young Indian boy who was so hungry that he killed the robin, took up so much room that we were not able to complete our description of the school.

I mentioned that there were only three teachers at first, and so we divided the church into three sections, that the classes might not disturb each other.

In my morning Sunday-school I found that the infant class was the most popular one. Many grown-up infants wanted to be in it, and as the reasons they urged for being allowed to do so were strong ones, we had to yield in some cases, and let them sit down with the little ones.

One of these old infants was a man of at least seventy years. He did not seem to have any relatives in the village or among the Indian hunters thereabout. He was familiarly known by the name of Moosum (grandfather), by all the children, although they were a bit afraid of him.

Our acquaintance began one Sunday morning

when he deliberately walked into the service in our church and in quite a loud voice shouted out: "What cheer! What cheer!" the Cree mode of salutation, which, according to the tradition of the Indians, was first brought up from the coast, where it was learned from the sailors. It has now been thoroughly incorporated into the language, although many of them as they use it in their greetings generally cry out, "Wat cheer! Wat cheer!"

After the old man had shouted out this greeting, he very gravely kissed several men and then walked across the church to where the women were seated and kissed about a dozen of them. Of course these proceedings on his part quite upset the decorum of those not acquainted with such scenes in a church during the public service. However, the old Indians were not in any way disturbed, and so the service went on as usual.

The next thing the old man did was to take out his big pipe, and after lighting it with his flint and steel, he began smoking. Even this did not disturb the people, but when during my sermon he began making some remarks, a couple of my old Indians went to him and told him that this was the House of the Good Spirit, that they were to worship Him, and that no one was to do

anything to disturb the worship, as it might displease Him.

These words completely quieted the old man, who knew that it would never do to make angry the Great Spirit, and so he immediately stopped smoking and remained perfectly still until the service closed. As this was the first time he had ever been in a church, he was much interested.

At the close of the service I had some talk with him and found him anxious to learn all he could about the Book and teachings of the Good Spirit.

That he was a Cree Indian was evident from his language. Who he was, and where he came from, he would not tell. The people whom he kissed when he came into the church, were the only ones who knew anything about him, and they had met him only in their distant hunting grounds. He remained for some time in our village and repaid the hospitality which is ever extended to strangers by Indians, by aiding his entertainers in their hunting and fishing duties.

He attended all the services of the church, and never offered to light his pipe again in the Lord's house. He gave the greatest attention to all that was said, and seemed anxious to remember what he heard.

But it was the Sunday-school that most deeply interested him. He never missed an opportunity to attend, and so it came to pass that we looked for him as regularly as we did for the boys and girls of our people. The oddest thing about him was that he would always go into the infant class, although, as we have told you, he was an old, old man.

When I invited him into my class he would shake his head and refuse me most decidedly. Mrs. Young would say :

“ Surely you will feel more comfortable with the larger people than you can with these little boys and girls.”

His mind was made up, and we could not convince him that he had made a mistake. In the infant class he would and did remain. And after all, none could blame him, but rather feel sorry for him when he gave the reason of his choice.

“ This old body,” he would say, “ has seen many winters, but my mind is just as a new-born child in the knowledge of the Good Spirit as revealed in His Book. So I must sit down and learn with the young ones, who are of my own age in these things.”

So there we let him sit and listen and learn, and, as we saw him so eager and attentive, we

could see an additional force and beauty in that verse of the old and glorious hymn, "Tell me the Old, Old Story," which says :

"Tell me the Story, simply,
As to a little child."

The end of our acquaintance with him came sadly and abruptly, and, as it was in this same Sunday-school, we will give it here.

Our plain Indian church was provided with movable benches. These we had arranged every Sunday morning for the Sunday-school, then when the school was dismissed, Oig, the church-keeper, and the boys, speedily rearranged the seats for the public services.

One morning after the school was dismissed and many of the children had gone out of the church for a few minutes in the pleasant summer air, this old man, Moosum, instead of also going out, as he generally did, while the church was being prepared for the large congregation that would soon assemble, deliberately gathered his big blanket carefully around him and sat down on the floor between two of the benches. His blanket was so arranged that his head was completely covered up in it.

As his position was such that the seats near him could not be put into their desired places,

I went over and spoke some kind words to him. To my surprise I found him weeping bitterly. This much amazed me, as it is very seldom that a pagan Indian weeps. In response to my inquiry as to the cause of his weeping, there was at first no reply, except what seemed to be some strong efforts to get himself under control.

When he had sufficiently mastered himself he sprang up, and throwing back his blanket from his head and extending his long right arm, he fairly thrilled me as he said in loud, earnest tones :

“ Why didn’t you come sooner? Why have you, our white brothers, who have had this Book so long, and knew all these things about the Great Spirit, whom you say we might call Our Father, been so long in coming to tell us these things? What have you been doing? These men and women hear them, and so do the little children. All who hear them are made better because they hear.

“ I once had a wife and little children, but no white man came with the Book and told me how to act. I was cruel to my family. They are all dead. If you had come sooner, we might have heard these things and my children might have been alive to-day. But the white man with the Book did not come, and so I could not

listen and be kind to my children, and now they are all dead—dead—dead!"

Then, as though the loneliness of his life seemed to come to him again, his strong nature broke into a paroxysm of weeping.

I tried to say some comforting words, but oh, how hollow and full of mockery they seemed! I could not but feel that all he said was true, awfully true—that we, who have the Book, with all it reveals of the loving Father and His Son Jesus, are verily guilty because we are not more prompt and zealous in sending and carrying the gospel to those who have it not, that their dark minds may be illuminated and their cruel natures made kind and affectionate.

But the old man now paid not the slightest attention to what I said. As soon as he could get himself under control, his Indian nature again so asserted itself that he appeared ashamed at having given away to tears. He quickly gathered his large white blanket around him in graceful folds, and with all the dignity of a Roman senator, he silently left the church and disappeared in the not distant forest.

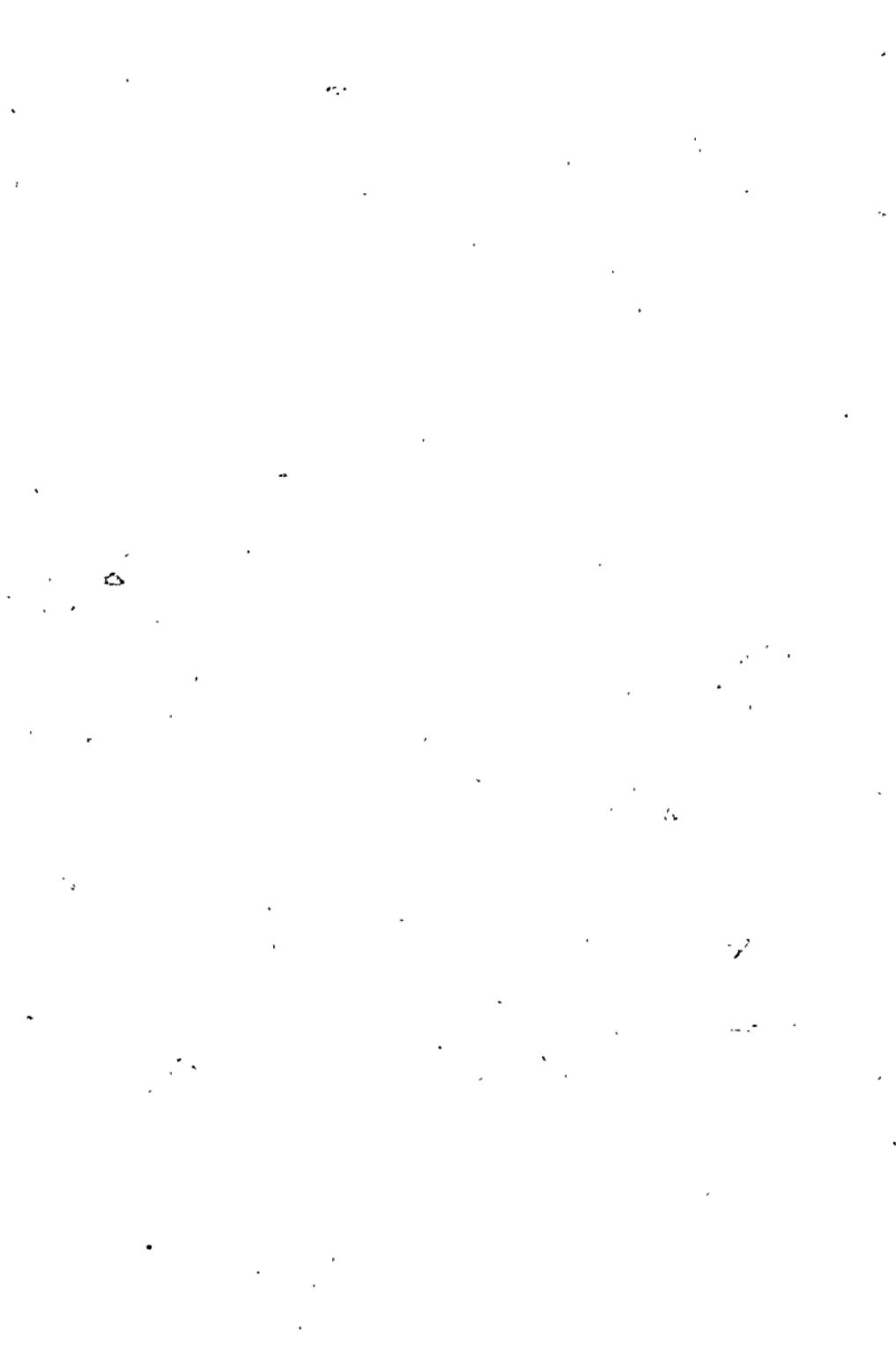
We never saw or heard from him again. Where he had gone or what had become of him I never could find out.



CHAPTER ELEVEN.

A Dinner of Potatoes versus Three Sermons

The queen challenge of the pagan Indians. The challenge accepted. The good results. The increase of potatoes. The good they accomplished. Sternness necessary to preserve some for seed—how accomplished. "Plenty of planting."



XI

“ **S**AY, missionary,” said the chief to me one day, “ there are some pagan Indians over at the fort, and they told me to tell you that they would come over and hear you preach three times on Sunday, if you would give them one big meal of your new potatoes.”

“ All right, David,” I replied, “ tell them to come, and they shall have a square meal of potatoes.”

Come they did. And although they had never been in church before, they listened attentively to all my sermons that day, and I did all I could to pack as much of the gospel as possible into my addresses.

Of course they got my potatoes, and it would have done you good to see how they enjoyed them and the quantity that they ate!

We speedily became great friends, and the men and their families, with whom we thus became first acquainted in this queer way, afterwards became good, earnest Christians.

Now having told you this instance of how my potatoes helped me preach the gospel, I must

tell you how it was that I introduced them among some Indians who had them not. Missionaries had earlier brought potatoes among them, but their cultivation had about ceased, owing to the failure of seed.

Although the summer is very short in those high latitudes, yet the hours of sunshine in the summer months are so many that the increase of vegetation is very rapid. The result is that hardy vegetables and grains grow and develop with a speed that is almost incredible.

I succeeded in obtaining from Hamilton only four potatoes of the variety which I wished to begin with, and unfortunately for me it was so late in the season ere I was able to plant them —the 6th of August—that that year my crop consisted of a handful of little ones about the size of acorns.

However, we were not easily discouraged, and so we packed those small potatoes in cotton wool and hung them close up to the ceiling in our dining-room, over a large stove that was kept hot with great wood-fires, day and night, from October until May. When we took down and examined our potatoes in the spring, while they had not been injured by the frost, yet they had become so shrivelled by the hot, dry air that they were not much larger than garden peas.

The first thought was to throw the poor little things out of the door. Then we remembered the story of the life and development of the dried-up grains of wheat found in the hand of an Egyptian mummy, and so we resolved to do the very best we could with these small potatoes.

But, just fancy, planting potatoes that were not larger than peas! Was it not enough to discourage anybody? Though we had gone into that land expecting to face difficulties and discouragements, this was a severe test. Still we resolved to persevere and see if we could not get some good out of these small specimens. We very carefully prepared the nicest, warmest little spot in our garden, and there in rich soil we planted the wee potatoes. We saw them in due time break through the soil and grow. They grew so vigorously and well that when they were ripe and we dug them up, we had a large wooden pail filled with splendid tubers, hardly one smaller than a cricket ball. We were indeed proud of them and thankful that we had persevered. We could not easily pack so many in cotton wool and hang them up in the dining-room, so we made our cellar as nearly frost-proof as possible, and there we placed our precious vegetables, taking the extra

precaution to wrap them up well in a couple of large prime buffalo skins. When the temperature gets down to sixty degrees below zero, Jack Frost has a bad habit of getting into places where he is not wanted, and so we were resolved, now that we had the potatoes, not to let him get his hands on them.

The next spring they were all right, and we carefully planted them; and in the fall, when we took up our crop, we had from that pailful, six bushels. These were all carefully preserved for seed, although our mouths watered for some of them. Guarding them well from the bitter cold through the following winter, we planted them the next spring, and were more than delighted when we measured our crop to find that we now had a hundred and twenty-five bushels.

These, our now thoroughly-prepared frost-proof cellar kept in splendid order for us, and so when the next spring arrived I was able to give small quantities to those industrious Indians who had prepared land in which to plant them. With hard labor, using heavy hoes, they had, as it is called, grubbed up the land and fitted it for planting. Ample returns rewarded their efforts, and there was great rejoicing at the addition of these large mealy potatoes, to the meagre bill of fare.

Knowing so well their lack of "thought for the morrow," I insisted on each Indian's depositing in my safe cellar, from five to ten bushels apiece, out of his crop for the next spring's planting. This they cheerfully did, for with all their improvidence they well knew that if there was no seed to plant, there would be no crop to gather. The result was that my large cellar was about filled up with my own supply and the various home-made boxes, containing the Indian's seed. The rest of the first year's crop lasted them for from three to six months. Then they tried every expedient possible, almost, except resorting to actual force, to induce me to let them have their seed potatoes to eat.

Of course there were many grand, sensible old Indians, like Mamanowatum, Soquaatum, Kennedy, Timothy Bear, Papanekis and others, who guarded their seed potatoes as carefully as any white person would have done. But, on the other hand, there were numbers of the natives, principally those who had lately emerged from paganism, and the naturally careless, improvident life which they had led, who had to be watched over like little children. At my request they would cheerfully give me out of their crops, when gathered, several bushels to put away for them for planting for the follow-

ing spring. Then on the rest they would luxuriate with great delight. With lavish hands they gave them out to all comers who visited them. Fish and potatoes, or venison and potatoes, they considered the grandest fare, and so the pot was always boiling, and all who honored their wigwams, relative and stranger, pagan and Christian, were invited liberally to partake of the savory fare. Very few indeed ever refused. The result was that in many cases the potatoes were all gone ere the winter was half over. Then the trouble began. Various, and at times comical, were the attempts to induce me to allow them to make raids upon their seed potatoes.

One Indian came in one morning and said that a fine young hunter had asked for his daughter in marriage, and so in honor of his having given his consent, he thought I ought to let him have half a bushel of his seed potatoes to eat.

Another old fellow came and said that as a fine little grandson had been born in his home, he thought, of course, I would let him have a bushel of his potatoes with which to celebrate the event. When I found that but few of the potatoes, if any, were to go to the young mother, I very decidedly refused.

Thus it went on, day after day, and we had at times to be very firm and decided with those who could get along without the food. When there was no pressing need, or case of sad affliction that really must be helped, it was no trouble for me to say no; but there were many cases when it would have been cruel to refuse.

"My little daughter fell on the ice and broke her hip, and she very poorly, lying in the wig-wam so long. She get tired of fish and she cry for the potatoes. Missionary, you please give me some?"

Who could refuse such a petition, put so well and quaintly, with the pronouns so mixed, by the sorrowing mother? Of course she got the potatoes.

Here enters a man with a sad face. He quietly sits down in the kitchen, silent for a while, that he may control himself ere he tells his pitiable story. His wife is ill with consumption and near her end. He says in his broken pathetic way,

"My wife he is so sick. He once strong and well. But now he so thin, once able to eat anything; now potatoes all gone and we have nothing but fish. He cough much in the night and so weak this morning. I cook the fish; but he no able to eat him. He say:—'O if I had a

potato I think I could eat him.' So I come to ask my missionary if him give me potato for my sick wife, him so sick."

Who could refuse such petitions, and there were many such, put so quaintly and yet so eloquently? The pronouns might be oddly mixed, but the hearts of the people were in their pleas and so they got the potatoes every time they could offer such pitiable requests. And I must confess to a certain joy in my heart at being able to assist them, even if, at the recital of their story, there were at times a bit of a lump in my throat and a mist in my eyes.

The long, dreary winter passed, and no real cases of necessity were allowed to go unheeded. But the drain on the potatoes was very great, and the more thoughtful Indians began to shake their heads and say: "Surely there will be but few potatoes planted by our people this coming season."

In April, the Frost King still reigns outside, for the temperature at night is often below zero, but somehow or other the mystery of growth has entered the mission cellar, and the potatoes are sprouting, and long shoots even find their way out between the boards of the rough boxes in which they have been so long confined. Po-

tato planting time is still six weeks ahead, and so as a matter of prudence for the preservation of the vitality of the potato, a call is made at the council that all the Indians who have seed potatoes stored away in the cellar of the mission house, are requested to gather there at eight o'clock on a certain day and open their boxes and rub off all the sprouts that have grown upon them.

This announcement by the chief, at my request, causes a good deal of excitement, and stirs up very diverse feelings. Some rejoice that they are so near planting time and that they have carefully stored away seed potatoes enough to give them abundance for the coming year. Others, alas, regret that there has been so much sickness in their families and they have made so many demands upon their little store, that they are surprised to learn that there are any left. Indeed, they say, the last few times they went and asked the missionary for some of their potatoes, they expected to hear him say that they were all gone.

But the missionary, who is present at the council and hears all of these and many other things, only says:

"Oh, come along every one of you,—even you who have had so many given out to you because

of the afflictions in your homes. You all remember how we began with only four potatoes, and I am certain that we shall find at least that many, even in the box of the man to whom the most have been given out."

With their Indian lamps, they are all on hand at the time appointed. The cellar door is opened, and, with the missionary leading the way, down they all go into the warm cellar, which has now been made the size of the foundation of the house.

The Indian bump of locality, according to phrenology, is large, and so every man knows exactly where his big box of potatoes was placed several months ago.

"Why the cover is nailed on my box," one declared. "I don't see any reason why the missionary should have gone to the trouble of nailing it up, when I am sure he had to take all of the potatoes out of it for me."

"Mine still seems very heavy," another cries out. "I wonder what has been put into it for all the potatoes which I have had out of it."

Thus they speak in the dim light to each other, as they find their big boxes all nailed up and heavy.

Indian hammers and hatchets are quickly produced, the well nailed covers of the boxes

are one after another knocked off, and to the amazement and delight of everybody, each box is full of splendid potatoes, the only blemish on which is the growing sprouts they are now there to remove.

Happy, grateful men they are! They seize me—they forget their stoical Indian natures, for they all shout together and catch me in their arms and fairly hug me, as though I were a child beloved, in the fullness of their delight.

What does it all mean? How has it come about? And so I have to still the joyous excitement and explain.

This latter is easily done as I tell them that while I had been apparently stern and cold to those who came and begged for the seed potatoes when there was no excuse but their desire to eat, yet, on the other hand no one had come with the story of sorrow, or accident, or suffering, or old age, when I had refused to give potatoes that would be a blessing. "But," I added, "I have not opened one of your boxes."

Then the excitement broke out afresh, and while Indians do not know how to cheer as white people do, they showed, by their demonstrative actions, the gladness of their hearts.

"Just to think!" they would say to each other, "potato planting time is near at hand,

and we all have plenty of seed because our missionary has been as a father to us. We love him, of course we do."

Then as they made another grab for me, I hastily escaped out of the cellar and left them to their work.

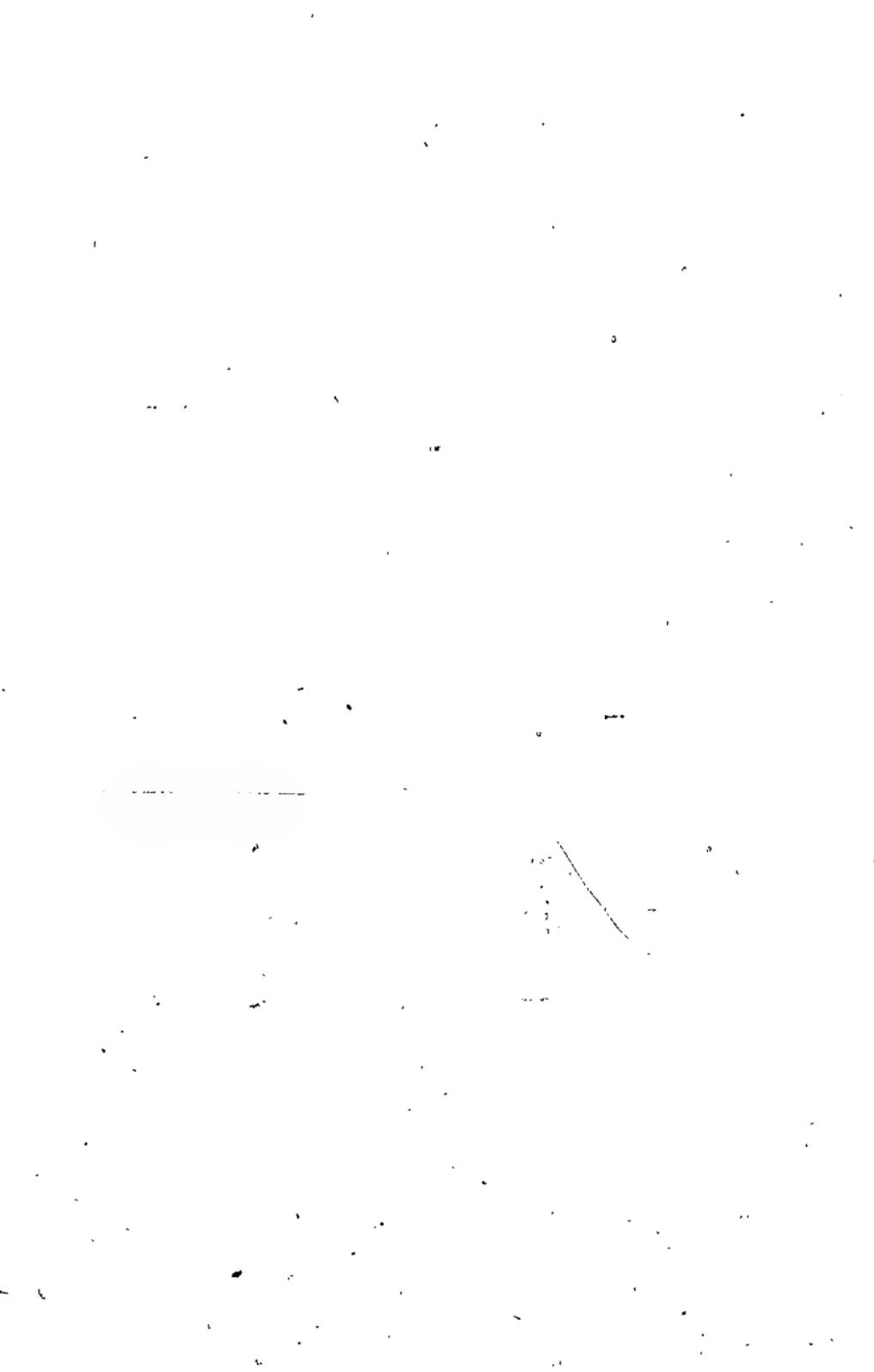
To thus help them I had to raise each year about three hundred bushels of potatoes myself. It meant plenty of hard work, but I was strong and well, and cheered by the joy that I well knew I should be able to give to many persons who had but few of life's pleasures.

Then each Sunday I could preach the gospel of salvation better and with greater confidence when it had been in my power to make some poor needy ones happier in their sad lives during the weeks past.

"We are saved by hope," and yet somehow I like the religion of helpfulness as well as hopefulness.

As the years went on, many of the Indians became wise enough to prepare cellars of their own in which to keep their seed potatoes. Still they are a singular people, and ever need a firm, guiding hand to assist, as well as a loving, strong heart to advise and counsel. It has taken long centuries for the dominant white race to reach the proud position held by it to-day. Let

us be patient with these poor Indians and not expect too much from them, so lately removed as they are from the habits and customs which for long years have been ingrained into them.



CHAPTER TWELVE

Ploughing With Dogs

Civilization following Christianity. A plow wanted. Hesitancy of the governor. Importunity triumphed. Ploughing with dogs. A home-made harrow. A fair crop of wheat. Women's brave work in mission fields. "My husband, he's melting."



XII

“ **I** see, governor, that you have a large number of plows out there on the prairie where the Assinaboin flows into the Red River. For whom have you had them brought into the country ? ”

This question I put, for a purpose, to the first governor of Manitoba, shortly after that Western Province had been incorporated into the Dominion of Canada and had a regularly organized government.

“ Why, Mr. Young,” he replied, “ those plows are part of the supplies we have promised to the Indians on the prairies, with whom we are making treaties.”

“ But you have more there than these prairie Indians will require for some years, and I wish you would give me one for my work at Norway House among the Wood Crees living there.”

“ Oh, it will be some years before we think of making treaties with the Northern Indians, and I cannot think of letting any of these plows go up north.”

Then I told His Excellency about my work

among the Crees, and especially our efforts at agriculture, and the laborious work it was, with nothing but big, heavy hoes to prepare the land. I also gave him a brief outline of my success with my potatoes, which much interested him.

This softened him a little, but officialism and routine were still uppermost. However, he relented enough to say that, if I desired it, he would give me a blank form of application, which I could fill out and send to the governor and council at Ottawa, and, if they favorably considered it, he would be pleased to let me have a plow.

"Governor," I answered, "I have had some experience of what is called red-tapeism, and it has not been at all satisfactory. Life is too short in which to waste six months in sending down such a request and then in waiting six months more for a reply which, in all probability, would come from some understrapper of a clerk and would only be a refusal, because he little knew of the necessities of my request, which had really not reached headquarters."

Still the governor argued he could not see what else could be done, although he admitted that the number of plows was much greater than the Indians of the plains would require for years.

This gave me the chance to plead the general good-will of our Canadian government towards all the Indians, and its uniform custom in the past of helping those who were trying to help themselves ; and so, as I saw this was my only chance, I did so and ended by saying :

“ Representing, as you do, the Queen, before the Indians, you might as well do what you know would be approved and give me a plow ; and in fact, governor, if you don’t, I *intend to take one*. So I give you fair warning.”

At these last words, he laughed heartily, and said :

“ Well, if that is the kind of a man you are, why just go and help yourself.”

And of course I went and took the best plow in the pile.

My Indian boys and I rowed that plow four hundred miles north in our rowboat. As it was late in the season we could do but little with it that year. In the winter, with my dogs, I came south again to Fort Garry, now called Winnipeg, which was then growing into a village, and is now a flourishing western city. There I bought thirty-two iron harrow teeth, several bags of grain, and other supplies. These we packed upon our dog-sleds and, in the usual method of dog-travelling, we journeyed several days, camp-

ing each night at various points, making our bed in the snow.

Coming down on the trip from Norway House, we started with full loads of fish which we "cached" at our different camping-places, that they might serve as food for our dogs on the return trip. By adopting this plan we were able to take much heavier loads of home supplies, as the item of dog food is generally the heaviest part of the load on a long journey. We were fortunate in finding our fish at all of our camping-places except two. Here the wolves had been too clever for us and had devoured our supply. Those two nights our dogs did not fare badly, as we fed them from our highly-prized beef and mutton, which we were carrying to our four-hundred-miles-away home in the wilderness, as luxuries to vary our monotonous fish diet. Luxuries or no luxuries, the faithful dogs that were dragging the heavy loads must not suffer even if their great appetites deprived the missionary and his family of some prime roasts or savory stews. With but few mishaps we reached our home with well loaded sleds, in spite of the wolves.

In good time I completed all necessary operations for some extended agricultural work, which, at the most, in such a place is rather limited.

As birch is the hardest timber in the north country, I made the frame of my harrow out of it. I bored thirty-two holes and into these drove the heated harrow teeth.

When spring opened and frost left the ground, I felt quite equipped for work. I had a good plow and harrow, several bags of grain and a number of packages of seeds of hardy vegetables and even flowers, and plenty of seed potatoes. But there was one great drawback which I suppose many a farmer would have considered an insurmountable difficulty. I had no horse or ox or mule. There was not even a donkey within a thousand miles of me.

Thus it would seem as though I was poorly equipped to commence farming operations. But missionaries must be able to get on with what they have. If they cannot get what they wish, they must make the best of what is available. Fortunately for me, I now had a goodly number of splendid dogs. Great, big, fat, good-natured, well-trained fellows they were. They had taken me some thousands of miles every winter as I went on my long journeys, carrying the blessed gospel of the Lord Jesus to tribes remote. With these dogs the summer was generally one long, restful holiday. My Indian fisherman, with his nets, kept them well sup-

plied with the daintiest of whitefish. So I felt perfectly justified in breaking in a little on their long summer holiday by giving them the opportunity of helping me in my summer work. With the help of my little son, who loved the dogs and was loved by them, I harnessed up eight of the biggest and strongest fellows, and arranging them in four teams, we attached them to the plow, as a farmer would his horses.

Then the work, or rather, at first, the fun began. The dogs had been trained to go on the jump, and so our greatest difficulty was to make them go slowly. When the word "Marche!" (go), was shouted, they sprang together in such unison and with such strength, that the weight of the heavy steel plow in the stiff soil, was as nothing to them.

I prided myself on being, for a missionary, a fairly good amateur plowman, but in spite of all my skill and efforts, those eager dogs would sometimes get the point of the plow up, and before I could get it down into the soil again, they, with the pressure off, were away with a rush, and there was no stopping them until we were at the fence on the opposite side of the field.

We tried driving them with lines, but these fretted and annoyed them, and, as I was fearful

that it would imperil their usefulness for winter work, I discarded them.

Sometimes we did fairly well by having my little son walk ahead or rather between the two dogs of the first team. It was hard work for the little fellow, as he frequently tumbled down, and then two or three pairs of dogs would run over him before they were stopped. But, not a whit discouraged, he would scramble up out of the furrow and from among the dogs and traces, and beg to be allowed to try again.

Thus we experimented until we got the intelligent dogs to understand what was required of them, and then the work, although of course laborious, was a great delight. I plowed up my garden and the few little fields I had, and, after sowing my grain, harrowed it in with the dogs. They liked dragging the harrow better than the plow, as I could let them go faster with it. They were guided altogether by the voice, and so it was not difficult to keep them going in the right direction until all the grain was thoroughly harrowed in.

With the plow and dog-teams, I furrowed up the land for the potatoes, and employed the Indian lads to drop them at the proper distances apart in every fourth furrow. It was such easy and rapid work that I was able to go with my

plow and dogs and help a number of the Indians get in their crops.

Our first crop of wheat ripened perfectly, even if we were supposed to be north of the wheat line. I cut it with a sickle, which was slow work. I threshed it with a flail, and one day when there was a steady, strong wind blowing, Mrs. Young sewed some sheets together and then we threw up the wheat and chaff. The latter being so much lighter, was speedily carried away.

When the work was finished we were the proud possessors of a considerable quantity of first-class wheat.

The question now was, what to do with it? There was far more than was needed for seed, as the supply of available land was so limited, and it was much more to the interest of the Indians to raise potatoes than grain.

There was no grist mill for grinding it within a distance of four hundred miles, and the methods of transportation were so slow and expensive it would never do to send it out. Fortunately we had a couple of coffee mills. These we kept busy grinding our wheat. We had no way of separating the fine flour from the rest, and so we cooked it all and found that it made capital bread and biscuits.

For some years this agricultural work went on. Before I left the mission among the Crees, to go and live among the Saulteaux, I procured a span of horses to do the work.

Some old pagans, as they smoked, and looked at the plow, dragged by the strong dogs, tearing up the furrows, thought that it was dreadful to see the back of the old earth on which they had hunted and walked so long, thus torn up and scattered by that great, cruel invention of the paleface.

In instructing those who were anxious to experiment with planting seeds or grain themselves, I had some amusing times. One old fellow, whose name was Oostaseemou, had tried potatoes, and, succeeding so well, he asked me one spring for some barley. This I gladly furnished to him, with all the directions how to manage it so as to get the best returns.

As he lived some distance away from the mission I did not hear from him for some time. One day, however, with a troubled face, he stalked into my house and, in answer to my inquiries as to his success with his barley, he exclaimed :

“ It is contrary stuff, worse than an obstinate wife; grows well, but all upside down. Then, when I change it right-side up, it dies.”

This was, of course, a puzzle to me until I went with him to his home and found out the mystery.

I wanted to laugh at what I saw, but as it would have wounded the feelings of the dear old man, I tried hard to keep my face straight while, with many words, he described his trouble with the obstinate barley.

Poor old man! He had been a hunter and fisherman most of his days, far away on the shore of Hudson Bay. He had never seen the first attempt at any cultivation of the soil until his coming among us. His success with potatoes greatly delighted him. It was a pleasure to see his happiness as he dug up a dozen or score of fine, large ones out of a hill into which he had, in planting time, put two or three little pieces of potatoes. At the risk of impeding their growth he had often uncovered the hills to see how they had been getting along during the season.

With equal solicitude he had been watching his barley. He was pleased at its healthy growth, and several times he had dug to the roots to see if the barley was forming *under ground*, as his potatoes had done. As there was no sign of any such formation, he thought that he was in too great a hurry. So he waited a

few days more and then tried again. Still no signs of the barley at the roots! So he waited still longer. Then, to his surprise, the heads full of barley showed on top. This would never do. He surely must have planted the seed wrong. So he had gone to work turning the barley upside down. But alas! it withered and died. What should he do?

Thus he told me of his troubles with the obstinate grain, while he showed almost a third of his little barley crop lying withered and dead. And no wonder, for the fine roots were in the air and the green, plump barley heads packed under the ground! I explained the growth of the barley to him, and thus comforted him. He quickly tried to replant the barley, but it was all in vain. All he had so rudely disturbed resented his actions and refused again to grow.

For an old Indian, he became quite an adept at raising various things. His garden was a very good one. In after years he often laughed at his first experience with barley and of his efforts to improve on Nature's plan.

Thus year after year, we worked and toiled on. Soon it became possible, and even imperative, that I should be much away from home, not only during the winter, but also during the summer months. Macedonian calls for the gospel

were coming in from every quarter. So I arranged to leave the work at the mission house in charge of my brave, practical wife, who, with Indian assistants, could manage every department of it, while, by canoe in summer and by dog-trains in winter, I travelled over a vast mission field, which was larger than either England or the State of New York.

All honor to the brave women who are doing such grand work on many an isolated mission field! The world does not hear half as much about them as it should, or give to them the praise they so well deserve. We all rejoice that their numbers are so increasing and that by their self-denying toil and tact and consecration, they are accomplishing such glorious results. Other pens are writing and will yet record their glorious deeds.

My joy is here to make mention of the one whose trip with me to that North Land was our honeymoon. There for long years she uncomplainingly shared in the hardships of that remote station where we were hundreds of miles from civilization, from the nearest white home and from the post-office.

When I was on my long journeys, often of six weeks' duration, by canoe in summer and dog-train in winter, the brave wife was all alone

among the Indians. Indeed, she did not see a white woman for five years! Yet she was happy, as well as very busy in the work. The sick all looked to her for assistance. Once she had to fix up a man's scalp which had been cut open with an axe!

Some amusing things occurred. A woman came one day with a pitiable story of her husband being full of pain in his bones, with fever and a bad cough. As the wigwam of this Indian family was several miles away the woman had come by dog-train.

As the case seemed to Mrs. Young to be a bad attack of La Grippe, which was then raging, she gave the woman three sweating powders and told her when she reached home to give one to her husband in a quart of hot water. She was also to keep him warm and to give him plenty of soup made out of the meat of a deer which the woman said he had recently killed. Then she was told that if that treatment did not cure the sick man in four or five days, she was to give him a second sweating powder. If he was not well after that, she was to give him the third powder.

These directions were repeated over and over, until the Indian woman declared she understood them perfectly. Then away she hurried on her

dog-sled to carry out these directions. On her way home she forgot all about her orders, and seemed to have become possessed with the one object of quickly curing her husband. She had a large dish which would hold between two and three quarts of water. This she speedily filled, and when it was nearly boiling, she shook into it the three sweating powders. Making up a great fire she placed the sick man, well wrapped up in robes and blankets, as near it as possible without burning him. Then she coaxed and scolded and pleaded with him until she got him to drink the whole of that mixture.

The results were soon evident. With the warm robes, the hot fire outside, and the three sweating powders inside of him, the man was soon in such a state of perspiration that the now terrified wife rushed back on her dog-sled to the mission house and almost throwing herself in the arms of my wife exclaimed:

“Oh, come quick! My husband: he is melting!”

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

The Birch Bark Canoe

Its perfect adaptation for its work. Canoeing in the summer months in the North Land. Our outfit. The varied route of lakes and rivers. Picturesque scenery. Portaging. Camping. The beautiful deer. The glorious vision. The sudden thunder-storm. The observant Indian.



XIII

THE canoe is emphatically the boat of the Indian. How long he was in evolving it from a dugout or a raft no one can tell. For his travelling on the lakes and rivers of this American continent, which, more than any other, has been favored with watercourses, the birch canoe is perfect. No civilized boat-builders can improve on its lines or shape. The result is that now thousands of canoes are in use at various summer resorts, where the waters are suitable for the light and graceful craft.

Under the guidance of those who are trained in its use, a canoe can be safely navigated over storm-tossed lakes or sped down wild, rushing rivers. So light is it, that when unnavigable obstructions, such as falls and cataracts, are met with in the river routes, the Indian hunter straps his outfit on his back and then, taking his canoe on his head, hurries around the dangerous places, and, when good water is reached, reëmbarks and continues his journey.

With the exception of a few skiffs, made by the Indians for sturgeon-fishing and other heavy

work, and the inland boats used by the Hudson's Bay Company for the carrying of their goods and furs, there were no boats in that country when I first went there, other than the birch bark canoes of the Indians. My first attempt to get into one was very stupid and naturally drew from a candid Indian the not very complimentary word:

“Monyas!” (you greenhorn).

I had, with civilized boots on, jumped into it from the wharf as though it had been a skiff. The result was I nearly went through the bottom.

While at a glance it is easy to distinguish a canoe from all other boats, yet each Indian tribe has its own peculiar canoe, differing from others according to the character of the waters to be navigated. Those Indians who lived on the shores of the Great Lakes had canoes that were unusually wide and consequently more able to withstand the storms that occasionally arose. Those tribes who lived on the treacherous rivers built their canoes much higher in the stern, and were thus better able to run the dangerous rapids.

My first canoe trip of any distance was to a mission station called Oxford House, and the many trips which followed differed from it only in minor detail.

I had with me two experienced canoemen. As most of the route of two hundred miles was in rivers or small lakes, we had but a medium-sized craft. Our outfit was as light as possible, as every pound tells on such a trip. One blanket apiece was all the bedding carried. As we expected to dine principally on what we shot on the way, we carried a good rifle and a couple of shotguns, with plenty of ammunition. A tin plate and cup, and a knife and fork apiece, with a couple of kettles, our axes and hunting knives, made up a luxurious outfit. Some tea, salt and sugar, with a few pounds of flour and an assortment of Bibles and medicines and changes of underclothing, about completed the load.

There is something glorious and exhilarating in getting away from civilization for a time, and living close to the heart of nature in some of her wildest domains. Then, when it is possible to throw them off, we get some idea of the despotism of many of the customs of civilization.

The route along which we travelled in some places was wild and rugged. Hell's Gates, where the mighty Nelson River is squeezed in between high rocks like small mountains, is well named. The roar of the raging water, as it seemed to fret and worry at being contracted

to such a narrow chasm, after having rolled along in a majestic river, with lovely, lake-like expansions, was not far behind even Niagara in its noise and grandeur. Running these northern river rapids is a wild and exciting experience.

High up on the beetling, overhanging crags at Hell Gates on Nelson River, two golden eagles have built their eyrie, safe from the arrow and bullet of the most adventurous hunter. In great circles they gracefully sailed around, sometimes descending so low that for a few seconds they were lost from our view in the dense spray that rose like the Pillar of Cloud from the thundering cataract directly under their inaccessible retreat.

Around the rapids our canoe was carried on the head of one of my Indians, while the other boatman and I carried the rest of our outfit as best we could.

Some of the lakes through which we paddled, or sailed with a blanket fastened to two paddles if the wind was favorable, were of wondrous beauty. The water was so transparent, the fir-clad, rocky isles so picturesque, the air so exhilarating and healthful, as it came to us perfumed by the balsam and the spruce, that it seemed a luxury to live.



RUNNING THE RAPIDS OF A NORTHERN RIVER



Some glorious days were spent among these scenes of wild grandeur and of idyllic beauty. Then there came some that were the very reverse. In the long, tortuous stream called the Eat-oo-mau-mis, a narrow sluggish, creek-like affair, the mosquitoes were in such myriads that they seemed to darken the air. Such was the character of the stream that all of our attention had to be devoted to the canoe. The result was, the vicious mosquitoes had us in their power, and incessantly did they do their work! Tired and hungry we went ashore for something to eat, at a spot where stood some dead willows that would serve as fuel. We had to be very energetic at our work, for so numerous and active were our tormentors that my Indians called our cups of hot tea mosquito soup.

As we were gliding along near the shore of a beautiful lake one day, on rounding a point we saw on the sandy shore ahead of us, a graceful doe with a pair of beautiful fawns. The hunting instincts of my men were, of course, at once aroused, and they seized their guns for the purpose of killing one or more of those beautiful deer. Much as we needed the venison, I would not let them fire, as the very presence of those graceful creatures seemed so much in harmony with the beautiful surroundings of that sweet,

peaceful spot. To bring death into such an Eden of quiet beauty I could not approve of, and as my sensible Indians, when remonstrated with, seemed to enter into my feelings, we noiselessly sat there and watched and admired, without any further attempts to mar the blissful harmony of such a pleasant scene.

We were so near that we could plainly observe—what all Indians well know—that a doe, when out with the young on the shore of a lake, never seems to expect danger from the water side. All her anxiety seems to be to guard against attack, from the forest. So it was in this case and thus we watched and admired the graceful, playful movements of this mother deer and her fawns for a short time, ere we moved along to a spot where she obtained a full view of us, now quite near to her. With a cry of alarm to the little ones, which quickly brought them to her side, she and they seemed fairly to vanish from our gaze into the dark still forest.

We slept each night just where our day's paddling ended. All we needed was some dry wood to make a fire, with which to cook the ducks, geese, partridges, beavers, muskrats, or any other game we had met and killed on the way. This, with a kettle of tea, was our principal food. At two or three places where we



MAKING CAMP FOR THE NIGHT



camped we set night hooks and so had some fish for our next morning's breakfast.

After our suppers were eaten, which, like all our meals, were much enjoyed, for such a life gives to all who are privileged to engage in it a glorious appetite, we had our evening prayers. My men were devout Christians, and so with them, it was indeed a great privilege, out there amid such quiet scenes of natural beauty where there seemed to be so much of God and so little of man's defilement, to hold sweet fellowship with Him whose untouched handiwork was all around. Then after prayers, when the Indians were enjoying themselves with their calumets (or pipes) at the camp-fire, there was often for me the quiet hour of communion with God and His works, which was the sweetest and most blessed of the twenty-four.

The hours thus spent amid those northern latitudes, for me are gone forever, but their memory will never die. All language seems insufficient to portray some of those sweet evening seasons, when, in the long gloaming of the northland, the days so wondrously melted away into the shadow, yet shadowless, glories of the splendid night. One vision of "heaven on earth" is often before me. From our camping-place on the smooth granite rocks beside a large

lake, we watched the sun sinking with undiminished splendor into the western deep. Up in the sky, but a few degrees above the descending monarch of the day, was a small cloud of golden beauty.

How it happened we cannot tell, but it seems as if that cloud transformed itself into a great prism, and, catching the rays of the sun, bent them down on the beauteous lake of sparkling waves and made it a vision of the Apocalypse. At first it was as "the sea of glass mingled with fire," then it was for a time the jasper sea, beside which we sat as though translated to the City of God. Then, in great effulgence, the cloud sent out its prismatic colors until on the rippling lake there blazed and danced in living light every hue that Nature has ever created or artist has ever dreamed. Ten thousand times ten thousand waves, reaching out over to the distant shores, seemed literally to gleam and glow and flash and blaze in crimson and gold, in purple and scarlet. There were waves following each other in quick succession—waves of diamonds and sapphires, of emeralds and amethysts.

That lake seemed like heaven's great workshop in which were being manufactured glorious colors sufficient to paint the "new heavens," while at the same time were being crystallized

from the waters the precious stones necessary for the great City of twelve foundations, whose maker and builder is God. For some minutes this vision of a heaven on earth lasted in ever changing beauty as the prism-cloud transformed itself. Then it flitted away and we came back to find that we were still on earth and not in heaven. We were thankful for the vision and rejoiced that He who gave us this glimpse of heaven, will admit us to the abiding splendor of the Eternal City by and by.

In contrast to these sweet and lovely scenes there were some storms and head-winds that called into active play not only all the cleverness of my trained Indians, but also all the exercise of our patience and endurance.

I was very much struck one day by the ability of my Indians to perceive the coming of a storm long ere there was any apparent indication of it to me. We were crossing a lake of considerable magnitude, and for some time I had observed that my men seemed somewhat uneasy and more than usually alert. During the morning we had heard distant thunder, but, although there were some passing clouds in the sky, to my eyes there were no indications of an impending storm. Suddenly the older Indian who was the guide, shouted:

"For the shore as quickly as possible!"

To me there was no special reason for the great hurry, but of course we obeyed and paddled as hard as we could.

The shore was perhaps a mile distant, and we reached it without trouble. Still to me there was no sign of an immediate storm, and I was somewhat amused at the zeal and speed with which my men first securely fastened down their canoe between two large fallen trees, then, with their two blankets and poles, made a kind of lean-to tent in a depression in the ground among some dense spruce trees. The guns they carefully wrapped in their water-proof cases and laid away at some distance, while the axe, to my amusement, they buried in the ground.

The wisdom of their hurried movements was soon seen. Hardly had all their preparations been completed when a terrible storm of wind and rain was upon us. So rapid and continuous were the lightning flashes and thunder claps that it was evident we were in the very centre of a cyclonic storm. With my blanket well wrapped around me and cuddled down between the two Indians, who had all they could do to keep their blankets, arranged as a slight protection for us against the gale, from being torn to pieces or blown away, there we sat amid the sudden

darkness of the storm which came upon us, broken only by the vivid flashings of lightning, accompanied by deafening thunder peals. Great trees fell in numbers around us, one of them crashing down directly across the two large logs between which our canoe had been placed. Fortunately they were large and strong enough to save our frail boat from being destroyed, but it required a good deal of chopping on the part of my Indians before the canoe could be released. This and other work occupied the men for some hours, and so we were not able to resume our journey until the next day.

Broken weather followed this great storm and we were drenched by the rain. Our first work each morning was to wring the water out of our blankets and also out of the clothes in which we had slept.

The Sabbath that we expected to have spent with the Indians—as well as the previous Saturday—in worship, we passed on a little rocky island in Oxford Lake, some miles from the mission. A wind storm raged, of such fury that our canoe could not possibly weather the gale, and so there we crouched in the most sheltered spot and let it sweep harmlessly over us. It was a trial of patience, to see the days go by, and to know that yonder in plain sight, on the main-

land, were the Indians gathered to greet and hear the missionary who had come two hundred miles to preach to them, but who was now detained there by that fierce gale.

No use in murmuring! "Fret not about that which you cannot prevent," was the maxim of an ancient philosopher. Wiser still were the words of the great Teacher Himself; so we three, there amid the storm, in worship and waiting spent that day, and then on the afternoon of the next we ended the journey and were cordially welcomed. Some happy busy days were spent in preaching and teaching, and then along the same route the journey home was made.

Thus each summer was spent. With our canoe we visited Nelson River Indians on the Burntwood River, and also those at Cross Lake, Poplar River, Beren's River, Sandy Bay, Grand Rapids, Oxford Lake, Little Saskatchewan, and several other places. At some of these points flourishing missions are now established. To some of these remote places devoted missionaries had gone years before my time, while at others of them it was my joy to be the first to preach the gospel of the Son of God.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

My Most Exciting Canoe Trip

Reason for taking it. Faithful Timothy's illness. Lack of facilities for travelling. Home duties calling. The old canoe. The old women's cleverness in repairing it. Three old veteran canoe-men. The journey begun. Varied adventures. A night of anxiety—the storm. The plucky old men. Our desperate struggle.

XIV

I HAD some thrilling experiences and narrow escapes from death during many long trips on stormy, treacherous Lake Winnipeg. It was on this great lake that, in later years, Rev. James McLaughlin, one of our devoted missionaries lost his life. With an Indian steersman and six Indian children whom he was bringing out to school, he was caught in a sudden storm. Just how they perished no one ever knew, as there was no survivor to tell the tale.

I have crossed that great lake twenty-two times, and so know something of it in its various moods, in its storms and calms. I have travelled through its waters in the summer time in canoe, or open boat, and in winter I have ridden or run with my dog-trains on its icy surface, when its waves were all imprisoned by the Frost King.

I have camped scores of times on its picturesque, rocky shores and have visited all the Indian bands, that in my day fished in its waters in the summer time, and in the winters hunted in the forests that skirted its shores. From my home at Norway House I visited and held re-

ligious services among the Indians at Poplar River, Beren's River, Pigeon River, on the east side of Lake Winnipeg; and at Sandy Bar, Grindstone Point, and Little Saskatchewan on the western side. I tried so far as possible, to visit all these places twice a year, once in my canoe in summer, and once each winter with my dogs.

"So intensely interested were the Indians in "The Old Old Story," I had to tell them, that in answer to their importunate pleadings I was constrained to send my interpreter, a devout and godly man and an eloquent preacher, to live at Beren's River. His name was Timothy Bear, and he was a man of a sweet and gentle spirit, one who showed in his life the marvellous transforming powers of the gospel.

At Beren's River, apart from the few houses of the Hudson's Bay Company, there was not a building in the place. The wigwams of the Indians were of an inferior kind, and so in preparing an outfit for Timothy I let him have my large lodge, a splendid wigwam, made of twenty-six buffalo skins.

In this fine wigwam we fitted out him and his family with everything necessary for their modest wants, and in good heart he began and prosecuted his work with satisfactory results.

One day towards the end of summer I received word that a cyclone had struck the village, and that Timothy's wigwam, as well as many others, had been torn from its fastenings and hurled away, leaving him and his family for some hours exposed to a storm of sleet and rain. The result was that Timothy had caught a severe cold and was bleeding badly from his lungs. In his troubles he and his wife, Betsy, had sent word for me to come to his assistance. My heart was full of sorrow for my afflicted helper, and as there was a boat, the last of the season, just ready to return to the Red River Settlement, I made a bargain with the owners to take me, with supplies, as far as Beren's River, where Timothy had camped.

I found my comrade very sick indeed, but cared for as well as possible by the kindly sympathetic Saulteaux Indians, for whose good he had been toiling. We all went to work and in a few days made for him and his family, a cozy little log shack, in which they would really be more comfortable during the long winter, now near at hand, than they would have been in the wigwam.

With the supplies and medicines I had brought with me, the family were well cared for, and as Timothy began rapidly to mend, I

began to feel a bit concerned about my return to my home.

It was now far on in November, and it was well known, that, some years Lake Winnipeg's waves were under the ice at that date. I had no time to lose, if I expected to reach my far away home by open water. All the sail boats for that season were safely hauled up and made secure. The Indian men were all away at their fishing grounds with their skiffs and canoes, catching their winter's supply of fish. My inquiries brought out the fact that there was not about the place a canoe that would be considered safe even for river travelling, let alone daring to venture out on Winnipeg's great waves in stormy November.

The officer in charge of the Hudson's Bay Company's post stated his inability to aid me, as all of his canoes were away at the fisheries.

After awhile, seeing my anxiety to get home, for I really did not wish to have to remain there until the ice was strong enough to bear me and then have to walk two hundred miles on it, he said: "Well, Mr. Young, there is a large, old canoe that has been condemned for three years. It is hanging on some beams in the fish house. You might go and see if anything can be done with it. It is no good here: so you can have

it, if you care to take it. But," he added, "I would not like even to have to cross a river in it."

I hurried out, and getting some old Indian men who had not gone to the fisheries, to help me, we carefully lifted down the old canoe. It was a dangerous looking affair in which to try to make such a journey. We had some long discussions over it. The old men smoked and talked and even some old women, famous canoe-makers, had their say. Examination revealed the fact that the ribs and stays were sound. The only trouble was in the bark. It was rotten in some places and broken in others—and what is a birch bark canoe without good bark?

Thus they talked and smoked, and decided that with plenty of new bark and much gum that old canoe could be patched and gummed up so that three old men, wise and careful, could paddle the missionary home, so that he who had come to comfort Timothy and be a blessing to them all, should yet see his family before Christmas.

When this decision was reached, with much burning of tobacco and drinking of my tea, they set to work. That is, the women did, for when old women were around, whoever saw an Indian man do anything to a canoe, except to give

orders. To the four women, who, I saw, were experienced canoe menders, as well as builders, I promised good pay for a good job. They were not long in securing an abundant supply of birch bark and gum. This gum or pitch, as it is sometimes called, is made by boiling down the gum known as Canada balsam, which is obtained from the trees by the women. Before they began, they had, out of my supplies, a good meal, which included a large kettle of very strong tea. Then they set to work, and the way they sewed, and patched and gummed the old canoe, delighted me. With straps, they swung the canoe up about four feet from the ground and filled it with water. Their keen eyes detected every spot through which the water oozed. These weak places they marked with a piece of coal, and so when the water was let out and the canoe overturned, they knew where to daub on more gum and skilfully smooth it over, thus making all water tight.

This process of testing was twice repeated, and then the old craft, which now, with its extra patching and daubing with pitch, was about as heavy as an ordinary skiff, was pronounced as well mended as it could be. But emphatic were the warnings to keep out of the choppy

waves, as the bark was so brittle it would stand no rough usage.

My three old men were plucky veterans, with much experience and good appetites, especially for tobacco and tea. I had selected them as soon as the canoe had been put into the hands of the old women for repairs, and so for several days I had the chance of fattening them on good whitefish and pemmican. It was astonishing, as well as amusing, to watch the change for the better that took place in them, as with great satisfaction they stowed away four or five big meals a day, for about a week. Everything now being ready we said "Good-bye!" to dear Timothy and the rest, and began our adventurous journey of two hundred miles.

Lake Winnipeg's shores are indented with great bays. The headlands jutting out on each side of these bays are sometimes many miles distant from each other. In ordinary canoe travelling, the plan is to strike direct across these deep bays from headland to headland. But alas, we dared not venture out so far from land, and so our pathway in the waters was like a succession of horseshoes, as we skirted the shores in these various bays. But we were all in good heart, even if our progress was slow. The old Indians were alert, and so active, that about every hour

of the daylight we were in the canoe. These hours, however, were not many, in such a high latitude, in November.

We made but one brief stop in the middle of each day for a hurried dinner, but the Indians made up for it, by the hearty morning and evening meals at which they arranged to have abundance of time. Every morning they were up long before daylight. The smouldering camp-fire of the night before was quickly re-kindled, and the morning meal prepared and much enjoyed. After prayers, the canoe, which had been carefully examined, was loaded, and then as the stars were fading out in the morning dawn, the journey was resumed. The most pleasant hours were those spent at the evening camp-fire when the day's work was done. The nights were getting cold and so it was delightful to gather round the bright fire of burning logs. There the three bronzed old Indians ate and smoked to their hearts' content.

The weather, for the time of the year, was fair, and as day after day we carefully paddled on with long steady strokes, we were congratulating ourselves on our progress. But the worst was before us.

At Montreal Point a long traverse has to be crossed to reach Spider Island, the last stopping

place before we enter the mouth of the Nelson River, at the northern end of the great lake. This traverse is over twenty miles across, and is all open sea, and the lake is here about eighty miles wide. As we gathered round our camp-fire the evening before the day we were to make the crossing, it was very evident to me that my men were much concerned and even anxious about the dangers before us. Fitful gusts of wind blew over us and flurries of snow were seen for the first time on the trip. We had made our evening camp-fire in a sheltered spot where we were protected from the winds, for we had no tent and the night was cold. None of us slept much, for we were all anxious as to the morrow. Several times the men left the camp-fire and went out to observe the winds and waves. But they had nothing encouraging to report.

The morning broke cold and cheerless, and the outlook over the wild waves was so disheartening, that it was decided to delay starting for at least a couple of hours. We hoped that with the sunlight on the waters, the big, wild waves would not look so remorseless and cruel. The strongest paddler was in the stern of the canoe, the next strongest in the front, and old Jakoos and I were in the middle. The man-

agement of the boat was left to the men at the stem and stern, while old Jakoos and I were just to paddle steadily and strongly, without any jerky movements. We got off at length and made fairly good progress for some miles. Then we noticed that the waves were getting very much higher and all the skill and care of our men were called into action. It was interesting to watch the clever way in which the Indians so managed the canoe that when a great roaring wave came towering on, as though eager to engulf us, they so skilfully used their paddles, that our canoe was partially turned sideways, and safely, like a duck, we floated over the foaming crest and slid down on the other side.

But very little was said, since every moment, without a break, the most consummate skill and nerve were required to meet and surmount the great waves that like Atlantic rollers were now following one another in quick succession.

I had such confidence in my men that I had not the slightest anxiety so far as they were concerned, but, as we went on mile after mile, climbing up those great, angry waves and then shooting down into the abysses between them, I could not but watch our old canoe and wonder how long she would be able to stand the strain.

Spider Islands, our next stopping place, were

now clearly visible and so, with quiet words of cheer to each other, we kept to our work, with unrelaxed vigilance, for the waves were, if possible, higher than ever. Sometimes they would seem so steep and tower up so threateningly before us, that as they rushed at us, I wondered why we were not swallowed up by them, but somehow or other, the buoyant canoe was kept just out of reach of what seemed the jaws of death, and then as we swung over the crest and the great wave rushed by, it seemed to laugh at the fright it had given us, as it rolled away in our rear to join its fellows. But in a moment of fancied security our trouble came. A wave, apparently no higher than many we had already safely passed, was before us. Cleverly, as usual, our steersman and bowsman surmounted it, but in going down the other side, our canoe instead of floating down sideways or partially so, shot straight down, into the trough of the sea, and ere it began the ascent of the next wave, it slapped with such force on the waters, that it split open, across the bottom, from side to side, just under where I was sitting!

We were indeed in a sad plight! With an ominous swish, the water was spurting up through the crack, which opened and closed with every movement of the canoe.

Indians are quick to act in emergencies. A large blanket was at once folded and placed over the crack, where I held it down as well as I could. The camp kettle, which would hold perhaps a couple of gallons, was given to Jakoos with which to bail out the water as rapidly as possible. This he did thoroughly and well, only once stopping to light his little stone pipe. The other three of us used our paddles, knowing that our lives depended upon the making of the mile or so which still separated us from the islands. Slowly the water gained upon us, in spite of our efforts. But still the old man bailed and cautiously, but strongly, the rest of us paddled. My feet were soon under the water and some small articles were afloat.

Our danger was very great. The canoe was getting heavy with the water in it, which now rushed from stem to stern and then back again, as we rose and fell upon the waves. Fortunately the waves diminished in size, as we were getting in the lee of the island. But the water still gained on us. All we could do was desperately to paddle on.

“Bail away! Jakoos.” “Grand old man!” I said encouragingly.

“Paddle your best, men. See, we are within a few hundred feet of the shore.”

"What is that?" I asked anxiously. Our canoe had sunk down nearly to the water's edge, and had come to a dead stop.

"Ho! Ho!" they shouted. "We have grounded on the sand, and are safe."

Like an otter every man bounded out of the canoe into the shallow waters. With four hands on each side we steadied our craft and did not stop until we had her high and dry upon the sandy beach of the lonely, desolate Spider Islands. We looked into each others' faces. A mist is in our eyes but gratitude filled our hearts.

"Sing, men," and they sang:—

Mah me che mik way yoo tah week,
Mena Jesus wa koo see sik,
Me na ka nah tee sit ah jak,
Mah mah we yas, mah me che mik.

"Praise God from whom all blessings flow."



CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Some Indian Characteristics

Variety of languages and customs. Picturesqueness of Native dress. Methods of preparing skins for use. Comfortable and enduring garments. Beautiful wigwams like the buffalo, things of the past. The Stone age—crude stone axes. Fire always necessary in their use.



XV

THE vastness of the country perhaps had much to do in developing those characteristics which distinguish the red men of America from the inhabitants of other lands. The magnificent forests, lakes and rivers, with the boundless prairies and infinite diversity of hill and plain undoubtedly exerted powerful influences upon them.

Their necessities made them nomads and hunters. Their having no written language and their rapid drifting apart in clans and tribes to remote localities, as their inclinations or necessities demanded, soon resulted in their disintegration. Having no central place for frequent reunions and no standard of comparison the result on the language was, as has been the case among all peoples, the ever changing of the forms and sounds of words and the introduction of new ones. New dialects were, in time, thus created and in a few generations it became true that people who were originally of the same great family, were unable to converse with each other.

With these wide separations and estrangements, added to ambitions and jealousies over hunting grounds, it is hardly to be wondered at that wars broke out among the people, and were so continuous that hunting and war came to be considered the only two occupations worthy of manhood.

What little agriculture was carried on among them, as well as all of the drudgery of every day life, was left to the women and girls. The war spirit, as well as the ambition to excel as hunters, led to constant exercise with weapons, which, after all, seem never to have risen to anything more effective than bows and arrows, war clubs and spears. These, however, as well as the canoes, made from the bark of the birch, or hollowed out of the trunks of trees displayed much artistic skill as did also their pipes and household implements.

The Indian garments were more or less elaborate and abundant according to the latitude in which the people lived and the taste or vanity of the different tribes.

To the Indian on the plains or prairies, where the buffalo roamed in countless herds, that animal not only furnished food, but it also, from its skin, furnished him with his wigwam and clothing. The skins of the otter and beaver as

well as those of other fur bearing animals were much used by the Indians of the northern states and Canada, before the beginning of the fur trade by the enterprising white man.

The Indian women have ever been noted for their cleverness in dressing the furs and skins of the wild animals and forming them into picturesque garments for their chiefs and great men.

The skins of the buffalo, deer, moose, antelope, and elk provided the ordinary clothing in the regions where these animals were most abundant. These skins, dressed and smoked in Indian style, were soft and pliant and made garments that were comfortable and enduring.

The smoking of the skins was quite an art, and was the only method used by the Indians for their preservation, as they knew nothing of the astringent qualities of the bark of the oak or hemlock. To get the best results in the smoking of the skins, the women preferred the dry rotten inner wood of a dead birch tree, as they said its smoke was more acrid and pungent than that of any other wood. A hole was dug in the ground and in it the decayed wood was placed and ignited. It gave out no flame, but a very dense smoke. Over this the skins, which were generally sewed together like a bag, were stretched. The greatest care was now necessary to smoke

the whole to an even color, similar to that of a dyed piece of cloth. To do this required much experience and skill.

So firm and enduring were found to be the leather garments of the Indians, that when the white men made their appearance as hunters or woodmen they were not slow in adopting them. They found them to be not only strong and warm, but light and more suited for the wear and tear of wild, rough life than any of the garments of civilization.

We have become accustomed to seeing thus attired our confreres of the paleface, from the early *courreurs des-bois*, down to the western cowboys. The leggings and moccasins are still in evidence among us. Hunters find that there is nothing in civilized apparel that can take their place for utility and comfort. They have held their ground against all innovations and are now disappearing for the simple fact alone that the material for their manufacture is becoming so difficult to obtain. The Indian shoes, called moccasins, with some variation in spelling, among different tribes, are much superior for the Indians to any of the boots or shoes of civilization. The best are made of moose skin dressed and smoked in the peculiar Indian way. The shape differs in different tribes. Some are

handsomely ornamented, and when elaborately made, as for some great ceremonial or marriage occasion, and carefully prepared of unsmoked leather, are as white as the whitest of kid leather. They are more or less artistically decorated with colored horsehair, porcupine quill work, and in later years, with beads and silk work.

They were exceedingly comfortable, cool and light in summer and in winter, as the writer well knows by the experience of their use for many years, so warm that cold feet were unknown, even when one travelled all day and the temperature ranged from forty to sixty below zero. Among the early Indians such things as cramped feet or corns, were absolutely unheard of.

The fact that the garments were so enduring, was owing not only to the way in which the skins had been prepared, but also to the fact that all of the sewing was done with sinew. The best of the sinew, which was obtained from the back of the deer, was, when well prepared by the Indian women, so strong that an Indian leather garment never ripped nor ravelled. Buttons sewed on by it might wear out, but the sinew never failed.

"Give an Indian a knife and a string, and he will make a living." This was a common saying among the early whites, who were close ob-

servers of the ingenuity and fertility of resources of these children of the forest. While the knife was invaluable to the red man, the string was almost equally important. With string or twine made out of sinew, as fine as thread and very much stronger, he made snares with which he captured rabbits, partridges, ptarmigan and other small game. He made larger strings, by carefully cutting up various skins. Some of these were like the catgut of civilization and were used for many purposes. The lariats and lassoes were made of leather, carefully cut and then braided and oiled.

In some of the temperate and southern regions the forest furnished several kinds of bark out of which the Indians were able to make twine and ropes and thread for weaving. In sewing, the methods were most primitive. As they had no needles, a fine pointed bone awl was used to puncture the holes through which the sinew was drawn. Thus the process, if abiding, was necessarily very slow.

The garments of the great war chiefs were often not only thus elaborately made and decorated in the usual manner by the clever, industrious Indian women, but to some of them were also added the long black scalp locks of human hair, torn from the heads of enemies.

As regards the habitations, the very fact of the Indians' living by the chase kept them ever on the move. The result was that their dwelling places were of the most flimsy character and, as in the case of their skin wigwams, especially on the great prairies, where building materials could not be obtained, such as could easily be moved about. The result is the absence of anything like permanent ruins of homes, such as are found in other parts of the world among less roving people.

Then, as there was no order of nobility or caste among them, the wigwam of the mightiest chief was no better than the lodge of the modest member of the tribe.

The religious beliefs of the people were in two great Spirits, one ever working for their good and the other to their hurt. These two antagonistic powers were almost universally called "Good Medicine and Bad Medicine." They were spiritual influences pervading everything, and therefore not to be localized. The result was the Indians had no church, no altar, no temples. The medicine men or conjurors were those of the tribe who were supposed to be in communication with the spirits, and they asked for no better buildings in which to carry on their incantations than the ordinary wigwam or lodge of the tribes.

The result is that north of Mexico there are practically no ruins of temples or other buildings of any great architectural pretensions. The abodes of the cliff dwellers are interesting but seem to have been originally formed only as places of safety from enemies.

The stone age of the Indians has left for us some implements which throw light upon their methods of work.

The stone chisels used by the women in dressing skins were made blunt so that they would not cut the leather, although they were used with a good deal of force to separate the flesh and fat from the green hides which were tightly stretched on a frame.

Some of the domestic vessels were carved out of wood; the butternut and the basswood trees being preferred for this, as they were easily worked and not liable to split. All the cooking vessels were made of clay, burned hard and firm. The larger ones were sufficiently strong to be used in the boiling of the game and fish.

One of the most common and abundant is what is called the Indian axe. Yet if we understand by that word an instrument for felling trees and then cutting them up either for building uses, or for the fires, we find ourselves very far from the truth. No Indian stone axe could

make any impression on the great native trees of American forests. The agent used for bringing down the forest trees, and then in getting them into the lengths required, was fire. When logs were needed to be formed into canoes, or more properly dugouts, the proper tree was selected and at its base a fire was started. When it had so progressed that living coals were formed in the trunk, these were carefully picked out, by the so called Indian axe. This axe was made from hard stone, by the use of harder ones to reduce it to the shape required. It was then fitted with a handle, which consisted of a green with firmly wound round the groove made outside of the implement. By this constant picking at the trunk of the tree as the live coals were formed by the continuation of the fire, some progress was slowly made, and, with good success, in a few days a large tree would be cut off at the desired length for the formation of a dugout.

Time was not considered of much value in those days.



CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Life in the Wigwams

Universal communism. Perfect equality. Varied incidents. The famous story-teller. Leaves from an old journal. The beginning of a mission under difficulties. The traditions of the origin of species.



XVI

THE wigwams of the Indians, whether on the prairies, made of from twenty to forty dressed buffalo skins, or, in the far north, skilfully built of layers of birch bark over a skeleton work of poles, were, when sweet and clean, not unpleasant dwelling places in the warm summer months. There was a pleasurable excitement in living in them, especially when camped on the shores of a great lake or near a rushing river, where the noise of many waters, acted as a lullaby to sleep. Here, breathing the ozone of the forest trees, a glorious tonic, one felt much nearer to the heart of Nature than when cooped up in houses of brick or stone, amid the dust and grime and excitement of the great city.

But while the life in a sweet, new wigwam with congenial surroundings, may be delightful in summer time, there are seasons of the year in the high latitudes when all the poetry and romance and pleasure, are conspicuous by their absence. When the sleety rains come; quickly followed by the heavy snow-storms, and the temperature rapidly runs down until the cold

becomes intense and what sunshine there is, while beautiful to behold, is a delusion and a snare as regards warmth or comfort, then, if there is any romance or enjoyment in huddling with a lot of stolid Indians who sit around you in silence, their heads covered with shawl or blanket, while the little fire is not much better than a mosquito smudge with its acrid smoke going into your eyes rather than up and out at the orifice at the top of the wigwam, well, I fail to see it.

With the disappearance of the buffalo the beautiful wigwams of the past are gone and poor indeed are those that remain.

That human beings can live in such frail abodes in such cold regions is indeed surprising. But they do, and many of them seem to thrive amazingly. In those wigwams are to be found the fattest and most good natured of babies, and the healthiest of boys and girls. To you, as a stranger and a paleface, they may be shy and timid at first, but after a time they are found to be full of fun and mischief, and as ready for romp and frolic as any white boys or girls. There in stately dignity, sit the old men with the long pipe ever in their mouths or hands. The women seem always busy. Some moccasin-making, leather-sewing, or basket-making



INDIAN BUFFALO WIGWAMS



seem always to keep them busy when not otherwise engaged.

The hunter would come in, it may be, after days of absence in the woods, and without greetings to any one would take his place beside his wife, whose first recognition of him was generally to place the fat good-natured papoose (baby) in his arms if there was one on hand. Then, especially if it were a boy, the stern, impassive face relaxed and with some endearing words the father kissed and played with the child, while his wife busied herself with getting him something to eat.

After he had eaten and while he smoked, he spoke of his success or failure in the hunt. His words, whether they told of great success or complete failure, met with the same quiet response. There were no noisy congratulations on success, neither were there any bitter condemnations if he had failed. It was taken for granted that he had done his best, and if successful that was his reward ; if not so, why say anything to humiliate him the more, as he felt and was mortified by his failure.

I have known two hunters to return to the wigwam about the same time. One had been successful, the other had failed. Yet it was difficult for an outsider to tell from anything

that was then said in the tent which had been the successful one.

Everything is held in common. So long as game has been secured and the big pots can be kept boiling, it seems to matter but little who brought back the supply.

What a mixed-up crowd we often were in some of those wigwams! Men, women, and children, and dogs, and at times it seemed as though all were smoking except the missionary and the dogs!

When wild, bitter storms raged without, we huddled around the fire with our feet tucked under us. The Indians generally listened attentively and smoked incessantly, while I talked to them out of the great Book, for sometimes my coming to that wigwam was but once a year. They were anxious for the exciting stories and accounts of the great things that are going on in the white man's country. Sometimes their credulity was taxed to the uttermost when I described some things the white man could do. At times, when venison or fish was plentiful and they had all enjoyed a hearty meal, washed down by large quantities of my tea, I would get some old tribal story teller to give us from his retentive memory, some of the legends and traditions of the past. The instant his consent was

secured, for it was not always easy to get him to talk, there was the most perfect attention, for all dearly love to hear these stories of the past, especially as recited to them by one who they know can tell them well. The fire was replenished, the pipes refilled, the papooses hushed down upon their mother's breasts, or laid away in their moss bags, the dogs were pushed back or banished, and then the talker talked.

If it was difficult to get him started, it was often harder to stop him. He would generally begin with stories of the times when all the animals and human beings were on friendly happy terms, with no enmity among them and all possessed one common language.

The Stories of Creation are very many. One of the origin of men of different colors so interested me, that I repeat it at the end of this chapter. The story teller also gave the Story of the Flood, of Keche Wapus, of Nanaboozoo, and Hiawatha, of great monsters that once lived on the land, and of others in the sea, of great Cannibals and Windagoos, still to be feared. When he talked of these Cannibals and Windegoos, the boys and girls hid under the blankets and the women put fresh wood on the fire to brighten up the blaze, as it is believed that these creatures like wolves, love the darkness and keep away

from the fires. When it was really time to stop, the patriarch of the wigwam knocked the ashes out of his pipe and said : " How! How!" and so the talker ceased, and soon we all wrapped our blankets around us and stretched ourselves out with our feet towards the fire, lying, a score or so of us, men, women and children, like the spokes of a wheel, the fire in the centre being as the hub.

Sometimes, in honor of the missionary, many relatives of the family in the wigwam that entertained me, came to see and to hear me, and remained all night. Then the question was, how we were all to be stowed away. Frequently the wigwam was so small that we of the first circle dared not stretch out our feet for fear of putting them into the fire. This did not add to our comfort, neither was it conducive to sleep, especially as to prevent being blistered or burned we had to lie in a position very much like a half opened jack-knife.

Thus it is; just as the happiness and comforts of home life vary in so called civilized communities, so do they differ in the wigwams of the red Indians.

I have spent days in some wigwams of Christian Indians where it was a pleasure to abide. The company was not too numerous, the dogs

were banished to the outside, the earth floor was evenly covered with fragrant balsam boughs, the fire was brilliant and almost smokeless because the wood was dry and good. The blankets and robes were clean and sweet, and best of all, everybody seemed happy and all did their share to contribute to the enjoyment of others.

The contrast to this idyllic vision is the remembrance of some of the abodes of wild, pagan Indians, where neither Godliness nor cleanliness were known.

As I turn over an old journal of my wanderings in the days of long ago I come to the following:—

“At Cross Lake we find about a dozen wigwams, fairly well filled with people of all ages. They are as yet all pagans and some of them quite averse even to have me tell the story of God’s love, as revealed in Christ Jesus. Some of them are fantastically dressed, while others are almost nude. They received us with civility, but evidently with much curiosity. They were filled with amazement at the appearance of my boots. We had injured our canoe in some rapids, and so I engaged a couple of old women, canoe-makers, to repair it. I was much amused as well as interested to notice the cleverness with which one of these old women made tight and

strong, a large rent that had been torn in the bottom of our canoe. She pulled a strip of cloth from one of her under garments, and then saturating it in the boiling pitch, she placed it over the crack in the canoe kneading it down with her thumb which she kept wet, until she soon had the break firmly and neatly repaired.

"With my Christian Indian canoemen I invited all who would attend, to come and meet me in the largest of the wigwams, which the owner had allowed me to use that we might have a talk on the Christian religion. About forty crowded in, with the household. Many came out of idle curiosity, while a few undoubtedly were anxious to hear the Truth. It was indeed a motley crowd and some things going on were trying to the eyes and ears and nerves of the speaker. Sitting just between me and the fire was a middle-aged woman, whose son brought into the wigwam to her a fine jack fish, weighing perhaps eight or ten pounds. I was in the midst of my address, but little heeded the woman. She was hungry and here before her was food. So quickly seizing a sharp knife, with a strong slash she cut open the fish and inserting her hand into the orifice thus made, she pulled out the largest of the entrails and rolling them on the end of a stick, roasted them in the fire, and, while appar-

ently listening to what I had to say, at the same time she devoured her dainty tidbits with great relish. All over the wigwam the men and women were smoking incessantly. Some used tobacco, others kinnikenick and others the bark of the red willow. Dogs came sneaking in, and whenever possible stuck their heads into the pots and pans, for the sake of the lickings that might remain. With objurgations, emphatic and loud, from some women, the magestimuk (bad dogs) were reduced to order, which, however, lasted but an exceedingly brief time.

“ Amidst such surroundings and with such crude material was that now flourishing mission at Cross Lake first begun.”

“ The above is a fair sample from my journals, of the early trips in the years now long past. Better days and happier times have come to these people. This legend, here added, is a good illustration of the many often told with much dramatic power by the Indian story teller. It was an interesting sight to see the rapt attention with which the Indians, young and old, listened to these oft told stories.

“ Long ago,” said the Indian story teller, “ the Great Spirit made this earth and it was so fine that he decided to create men to live upon it. So he went off to where there was a great clay

pit, and taking from it a large piece of the clay, he moulded it out into the form of a man. Then he put this clay man into an oven to bake. When he thought it was well done, he took it out, but to his disgust he found that it was burned black. This man, the Great Spirit threw to a hot country, where he became the father of the black people.

“Then the Great Spirit tried again. He took another large piece of clay and out of it he formed another man, and put him into the oven to bake. As he had kept the first man in too long, he did not keep this second one in long enough, and so, to his disgust, when he took him out he found that he was still very white. Seeing this, the Great Spirit was still very much annoyed, and addressing the white man he said : ‘ You will never do. You will get dirty too easily.’

“So he threw him across the sea to the land from which the white man comes.

“Then the Great Spirit tried again. He took another piece of clay and carefully preparing another man out of it, he put him into the oven to bake. Gaining experience by the other two failures, the Great Spirit so carefully watched this third one, that when he took him out of the oven, he was a nice, red color. He said :

“‘ You just right ; you stay here in America.’ This red man was the first Indian.

"Before these different men were sent away to their different parts of the earth the Great Spirit gave each of them a wife of his own color, and told them to go and take possession of their own lands and be happy.

"After some time the Great Spirit came down to the earth and called the men of different colors to meet him. He enquired of their welfare, and to his great surprise found out from them that they were very unhappy and miserable. When he asked the reason why this was the case, they replied that while it was fine to be possessors of such large parts of the country, yet as the Great Spirit had given them nothing to do, they found the time long and so they were unhappy.

"'Oh,' said the Great Spirit, 'if that is the matter, I will soon fix that for you.' So the Great Spirit told them to meet him again at a certain place in a few days. At the time appointed, they were all there and full of curiosity to see what he was going to do for them.

"They discovered that he had brought with him three bundles of different sizes. One was quite large and bulky, the next was much smaller, and the third was indeed but a small affair.

"'Now' said the Great Spirit, 'as there are

three of you, and these bundles are of different sizes, you men will have to cast lots which of you shall have the first choice.'

"Then the men cast lots, and the black man got the first choice, so he quickly took possession of the largest bundle. When he had opened it, he found that it consisted of hoes, spades, axes, and other implements of hard work.

"The red man secured the second choice, and he took possession of the next largest bundle. When he opened it, he found it contained bows and arrows, and knives, spears and lassoes, the implements of the hunter.

"Now there was only left the small bundle for the white man. When he opened it, it was found to contain only a book. At the sight of it, the Indian and black man laughed and made fun of him. But the Great Spirit reproved them, and said :

"You may laugh now, but you will not laugh long, for that book is a book of knowledge, and if the white man studies it, it will make him wise and clever, and he will yet be the master of both of you."

"And so," added the story teller, "the white man studied that book, and as the result he is the master everywhere, none of us are as clever and cunning as he is."

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Splendid as Well as Amusing Progress

Light and shadows. Visiting Indians seeking for light and instruction. Their new fields explored. The Indian's ambition for progress. Worthy but sometimes laughable. The sets—the hoops. Wigwams give place to comfortable houses—and cleanliness.



XVII

SO rapidly and thoroughly had the work of evangelizing the Indians at the first mission field—which Mr. Evans, its founder, had called Rossville—been carried on since its establishment, that there was now but little real missionary work to be done there, beyond what is incidental to an ordinary church, in a Christian land. Every vestige of the old pagan life was now gone from the actual residents. The people regularly attended the house of God and by their consistent lives showed the genuineness of the transformation wrought by the power of the gospel. We had occasional visits from pagan Indians, who frequently awoke the echoes around us with their monotonous drummings. While but little disturbed by the weird sounds, which, after the excitement and interest of the first nights, only acted as lullabies to soothe us to more refreshing slumber, we could not but admire the zeal and persistency with which they kept up their devotions, of which the drumming formed so conspicuous a part. Some of the old conjurors would hammer away at their magic

drums for twenty-four hours, without cessation. In these days when there is such an outcry against lengthy services and long sermons, and when so few Christians spend at least an hour a day in communion and fellowship with God in prayer and meditation, it will not hurt any of us to be reminded of the zeal and devotion of many, yes, of vast multitudes who so outstrip us in their zeal, as they worship dumb idols, or are the votaries of degrading superstitions. Let us not be outdone in our devotions by the zealous devotees of false religions.

Polygamy abounded among the Indians from time immemorial. The great chiefs in the earlier days generally had several wives. The number they kept depended upon ability to support them, although in many instances the wives, by their toil and skill as huntresses, really did all of the hard work, while their lazy husbands lived lives of almost complete indolence.

Polygamy is now rapidly dying out. The teachings of the gospel, and the fact that the government in paying annuities, recognizes only one wife, have had much to do with its disappearance. Still in a few pagan families it still prevails. Two wives are not uncommon among the remote tribes, but even there the custom will soon cease.

Many of these wandering pagan Indians were induced to come to our church services. As a general thing they were respectful and orderly in their conduct. Yet there were times when some of them, in sheer ignorance, went beyond the bounds of what was generally expected in the house of God. For them to take out their big pipes and smoke during the sermon, was quite a common occurrence.

We visited these newcomers at their wigwams and invited them to our mission home. With them we had many earnest talks about Christianity, and we encouraged them to tell us of their hopes and fears, and of their own beliefs, and what they expected to get from them. Things wise and otherwise, were said by them, and there was much for serious thought and reflection. In all their hearts was a craving after some vague, indefinable good which they seemed to know existed somewhere for them, but which eluded all their efforts to secure. To find it they, at times, went off into the woods and fasted, and, in their way, prayed. That it might come to them, some of them prepared their magic medicine-bags and beat upon their magic drums. But from all whom I could induce to unburden their heavily-laden hearts, there was ever the sad, disappointed response :

"No voice answers us and no comfort comes into our hearts."

Marvellous indeed was the contrast between their words and the utterances of "blessed assurance" expressed by the same Indians after their conversion to Christianity. Old things had passed away and all things had become new. Doubts and uncertainties had given way to a sweet, abiding faith, and the conscious knowledge of Him whom they believed.

The great, solemn fact had come home to me with startling vividness, that the vast, weary, waiting multitudes, groping in the dark for something they cannot find, yet with a clinging consciousness that it is in existence somewhere, are more ready to receive from our hands this blessed boon, which is the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, than most of us have any idea of. Once convinced that those who bring the message to them really love them, and that nothing but pure love has influenced them in coming, the Indians will come as never in the past, for the most constraining, drawing power in the world is love.

"Missionary," said a stubborn opposer as at length he yielded and became a Christian, "I accept this religion of the Book because I have seen your love for me and for my people. You

gave medicine to cure us ; you divided your food with us when my gun failed to kill the deer ; you helped me with your own hands to get my land ready to plant, and then you gave me potatoes to plant ; you gave us good advice during the week days, and so I have decided that as what you say on the Sabbath is from the same heart, I must receive it."

Following this heart reception of Christianity came, as there always does, a longing for a better and more satisfactory condition of temporal affairs. This showed itself in a desire for better clothing, more comfortable dwellings, and a more abundant and constant supply of food for the families. The result was more industry. The fur-hunters, as they became Christians and now realized their obligations to care for their wives and children, were more industrious and persevering in their efforts. They now brought in large quantities of the beautiful furs of the otter, minks, martens, bears, black and silver foxes, as well as great numbers of skins of wolves, wild cats, and others of lesser value. These they wisely traded for essential and comfortable articles of apparel, for the different members of the household, instead of, as was often the case in the past, lavishing most on the favorite wife, or, what was worse, still squandering all for rum.

This change was, of course, a benediction and filled our hearts with thankfulness, especially as, from the pulpit, I saw before me our people now so well dressed and looking so comfortable and happy. In this transition period from the old to the new, some ~~amusing~~ things occurred. As is well known, the Indians have luxuriant hair. Baldness is practically unknown among them. Up to this time the young maidens had been careless in cleaning and arranging their hair, so the wife of the missionary took a number of them in hand and taught them how to braid up their tresses and coil them in a becoming manner. As hairpins and high combs were practically unknown, much difficulty was experienced in keeping the braids and tresses in place. This was obviated at length by teaching the girls how to make nets, in which the braids could be nicely arranged. These at once became very popular and the girls and young women looked very well on the Lord's day, as, in scores, they came to the church with their hair so neatly braided and held in place by the nets, which were made of silk thread or chenille.

But the spirit of imitation was abroad, and the young Indian maidens were ever on the alert to see what the palefaces were doing and ever anxious to copy their customs.

It happened that about this time an officer in the Hudson's Bay service went down to the Selkirk Settlement at Red River, and there married a charming young lady and proudly brought her back with him to Norway House Fort. The next Sunday after their arrival they came over with several other officials and worshipped with us in our Indian Mission Church.

The wedding had excited a good deal of interest in our quiet community, and so this first appearance of the bride and bridegroom in our church, caused no little excitement among the Indians. The bride looked very handsome as she walked up the aisle and took her place in a square pew at the right of the pulpit. She was seated with her back to the wall, so that, when she stood up during the singing, she faced the large audience. She had on a pretty fringed veil that reached only to the end of her nose. This short veil seemed, if we may judge by what followed, to have attracted more attention than any other part of the beautiful apparel. The service began in due time. The hymn was announced and sung, and then the congregation bowed with the missionary in prayer. Fancy, if you can, how the missionary felt as, after closing with the Lord's Prayer, he opened his eyes and saw that, while he had been praying, a

large number of the Indian girls had been busily employed in pulling forward and nicely adjusting their hair nets over their faces, to look as much as possible like the little veil on the bride. I must confess that it was difficult for the missionary to go on with the service, as those girls sat there until the end without a smile on one of their impassive faces, although of course their actions afforded any amount of amusement to the few whites who were present.

Another instance of this spirit of imitation, quite as laughable, occurred some time after. Then the wife of the Chief Factor at Norway House, left us one summer to spend the following winter in Toronto. She returned the next summer, and the first Sunday after, she came over with her husband and others to worship with us at the mission. It was long ago, when crinoline was much worn. Up to this time that style had not reached our lonely, isolated station. However, this lady had now brought it with her and so, arrayed in all this extended attire, she sailed into our church, literally filling the narrow aisle as she marched along.

Of course there was some excitement, although it was quiet and subdued, among the Indians. When the service closed the Indian women all kept their seats until the grand lady in this new

and wonderful apparel should march out with her husband. Very quietly, but most thoroughly, was she scrutinized by their observant eyes. It was evident that they quickly discerned that hoops had much to do with the new fashion, for hardly had twenty-four hours rolled by ere nearly every barrel around the mission premises was denuded of its hoops, and one day I found that even the old ash barrel had fallen to pieces. What had become of its hoops I discovered next Sunday, when I saw the awkward attempts of some Indian maidens to crowd into the narrow seats, much encumbered by the inelastic ash-barrel hoops.

Thus even in that lonely land we had at times much to laugh at, while we also rejoiced that this spirit of imitation was ever leading the people to strive to improve their condition, not only as regards their dress, their food, their habitations, but also their lives.

With Christianity came the desire for better and more comfortable homes. This desire was of course encouraged, and so the dogs were set to work and logs were dragged by them from the forest. Tools were secured by the missionary, or borrowed from the fur-traders, and soon comfortable little houses were built. As there were no sawmills, pit-saws were kept busy,

boards were made and soon the houses were completed. As the years went by better ones were built. Some now occupied are quite comfortable and have many conveniences. They are homes, happy Christian homes, where the cruel, callous selfishness of the past is unknown, for love now dwells in every heart and each member of the household does his or her share to add to the happiness of the others, and, best of all, the love of God is shed abroad in their hearts, and this gives the highest happiness.

In those little Christian homes there is a family altar. The blessed Book is there read every day, and then the family bow down before God and the head of the house offers up earnest, believing prayer to Him whose ears are ever open to the petitions and requests of His children.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

The Indian Hunter as a Comrade

Necessity of early education. Some of the wild animals are marvelously clever. The wolverine—the most cunning of all—how caught after many attempts. The industrious beavers—their forethought and skill. Pleasant life among the Indians—their superior wisdom in many things—their loyalty and anxiety in times of danger.



XVIII

FROM time immemorial the Cree Indians of the woods made their living by hunting and fishing. Living as they did in a forest country, where great lakes and rivers abounded, they were not only good fishermen, but clever hunters.

As soon as a baby boy was able to run around, a bow and arrow were placed in his hands and he was quickly taught how to use them. It was a great day in his history when he shot his first bird or rabbit. There were many congratulations and many predictions of his future success as a hunter. Then when he killed his first deer or bear of course these congratulations were repeated, often with a tribal feast in which the animal slain was eaten, with much ceremony.

While bears, wolves and several varieties of deer are hunted and shot in considerable numbers by the Cree and Saulteaux Indians, it is, after all, the smaller animals that are of the greatest value to them. The rich fur-bearing animals such as the beaver, otter, mink, marten, fisher, wolverine, ermine, sable, and even the

muskrat, are of great worth, as their furs are eagerly sought after and purchased by the fur-traders. Of all the furs thus obtained, the most valuable are those of the black and silver foxes.

To be a skillful, successful hunter, requires long years of patient study and practice. So clever and cunning are some of the animals that they seem to be able to thwart all the devices and schemes of the most experienced hunters. As I visited these Indians in their wigwams, or at their camp-fires, I was often very much interested with the stories they related of their success or failures, as they pitted their reason and experience against the sagacity and cunning of the four-footed animals.

The wolverines, especially, were ever the object of the hunter's ire, for there were at times some of them which prowled around and did a great amount of injury, yet were so marvellously cunning that for a time no expedient that could be devised by the hunters, succeeded in their capture. There was one, especially, that Mamanowatum (Big Tom) used to talk about, that for years lurked around in several hunting grounds, as the very incarnation of evil. He would, some nights, visit and destroy scores of traps and dead-falls which had been arranged by hunters on the previous day for the capture of otters, minks,

martens and other animals. If the deer-hunters succeeded in killing a moose or a couple of reindeer, while they hurried away to their tents for their sleds the wolverine would frequently discover the game, and after carrying away all he could, would leave the rest with such an offensive odor that a starving dog would not touch it.

The way in which the cunning rascal was finally captured was this: The Indians borrowed from me some large steel traps, which they set in a number of places around one of their ordinary mink traps. So clever was the old wolverine, however, that he discovered them, although they were all set under a thin covering of snow. As though to show his contempt of the trick, he not only dug up and sprung each trap, but some of them he carried over a hundred feet away.

Several times did he outwit the hunters, until one day in sheer desperation, Mamanowatum and some others, carefully setting some of the traps as before, left a couple of the largest ones when set, lying carelessly on the ground. While cunningly moving about and springing the ones thus set, the animal seems to have been thrown off his guard, and was found with one of his hind legs caught in one of those exposed traps. The Indians said that in passing it he had kicked at it in contempt and had thus lost his life.

There was great rejoicing when he was captured and many an Indian was glad, for he knew that for a time, at least, his traps and snares would not be molested.

So my traps, while I seldom used them myself proved a blessing in thus capturing this mischievous animal.

I think I loved best to hear my Indians talk about the beavers, those most industrious and clever animals, that build for themselves houses very much warmer and stronger than are the wigwams of the people. They are still quite numerous in some parts of that country, and every year the Hudson's Bay Company, the greatest fur-trading company in the world, sends out many thousands of them, which are much prized for their warmth as well as for their beauty.

While beavers live on the land for a long time without any apparent suffering, yet in their wild state they seem to prefer to spend at least half of their time under water.

The queerest thing about beavers is their great, broad, flat tails, which are covered with scales instead of fur, like the rest of their bodies. This large tail is not only their rudder when swimming, but is also used as a mason's trowel, when they are building their dams and houses. When playing in the water they can strike the sur-

face with such force that the noise is like the report of a pistol. The intelligence and skill which they display in the construction of their dams and houses, have ever won the admiration of all who have had the privilege of examining them. No trained engineer can more scientifically throw a dam across a stream than can the beavers. To accomplish this purpose they will cut down trees over two feet in diameter, and will throw them exactly where they wish them in the construction of the dam. They will cut up trees into logs, and place them in positions that apparently would have required a span of horses. They will industriously fit into the spaces between these logs an enormous quantity of smaller pieces of timber and brush, and then will add stones, gravel, and mud, and pack the whole together in a perfectly water-tight structure that will resist any flood that may assail it. And what is more, they will build the dam so that it will throw back the water to exactly the height they wish it to rise in their houses, which are built half on the shore and half projecting over the water. In times of freshets, they open sluice-ways in the dam, through which to run off the surplus water; and in times of drought they close every outlet, until they bring the water up to the desired level.

In addition to their houses, which they build with walls so thick and hard that no wolf or wolverine can possibly break through them, they construct what the Indians call "kitchens," in various secluded spots along the edge of the pond, to which they can quietly swim and there hide themselves if attacked in their homes by hunters.

Thus they toil incessantly. And they are all at it! Even the little beavers have work to do, for it is expected of them that while the old beavers are building the dam and constructing the houses, the young half-grown beavers will be busily employed in getting the winter's supply of food. This consists of the young saplings of birch and poplar, which they cut down with their teeth, and drag to the pond and there fasten, either by sticking one end in the mud, or else by piling stones and gravel upon them and so keeping them at the bottom of the pond until required. The bark of these young trees and branches, is all the food the beaver needs during the long winters. This work of securing sufficient food is left wholly to the young beavers, who generally have an old one to oversee the task. He is often very cross, and even cruel, to them if they become lazy and try to shirk their work.

Beavers, if captured when young, can easily be trained. Over at the trading post, a couple of miles from where we lived, the gentleman in charge had a young beaver given him by an Indian. By kindness and patience, he so tamed it that it would follow him around like a dog. He kept it in his home until it was fully grown. One night he left it in his dining room! When the door was opened the next morning, there was hardly an article of furniture that was not ruined. The beaver, with his sharp powerful teeth, had cut off the legs of some chairs and a table, and had arranged the pieces nicely in a half circle in one corner of the room, in the way in which these clever animals generally begin the foundations of their houses. The gentleman decided that such an industrious animal was too expensive to keep running around where furniture was so valuable, and so he shipped him off to the Zoölogical Gardens in London, England.

It was very interesting to chat with my people and to draw them out in conversation on things that they knew so much more about than I did.

Then, of course, on the other hand, I was kept busy answering questions and telling them various things about white people and their in-

ventions and discoveries, and gradually interesting them in the Christian life. I fortunately had with me a large library, and so, with pictures and illustrations, I was able to interest them very much. Some were naturally incredulous about many things.

I had a fairly good magic lantern with some hundreds of slides on various subjects. These afforded an almost endless source of pleasure and instruction, although some of the more superstitious Indians, especially some old Saulteaux, were almost terrified at first. One old conjuror, however, mustered up enough courage to crawl in under the sheet in the darkness, "to see," as he afterwards told me, "whether I was invoking the aid of the Good or the Bad Spirit, to help me in making so much 'medicine.' "

Thus in various ways I tried to bring to the people things that would make their lives wider and better. So limited was their horizon that it was a very great pleasure for me to see them becoming interested in things beyond those of their every-day, narrow vision.

It was often amusing to hear their quaint remarks and original criticisms, as ideas new and strange were revealed to them.

I have ever found that among such people one great way to succeed was to honor them

along those lines where they were more skilled and experienced than I was. This can be better explained by illustration. For example, when travelling on my long canoe journeys, sometimes it would happen that when we came to a great lake across which we were to go, we would find the waves so high, and the winds so strong that my canoemen would be uncertain whether to go on, or to wait until the storm was abated. In their perplexity they would sometimes ask my advice.

"Missionary, shall we risk it and go on, or had we better make the camp and wait until it is more calm?"

My invariable reply would be:

"I know nothing about it. You know more than I do. You know how big a sea your canoe can stand, and so I leave it all to you. If you say:

"'Let us go on,' why that settles it; but if you say: 'Let us camp,' why that settles it. It is for you to decide, not me."

Some might consider this weakness on my part, but it was nothing of the kind. It was respecting the judgment of the men who knew, along those lines, vastly more than I did myself. And this respect was understood and appreciated by them and kept them on their mettle to

be ever worthy of it. Where I knew best, and it was right that I should be master, I kept my position ; but I should have been foolish indeed, and should perhaps have imperilled our lives, if I had dictated what should have been done in summer storms or winter blizzards.

" How is it," said a brother missionary to me, " that although you are the hardest driver, and make the longest and most rapid journeys with your dogs in winter and canoe in summer, the Indians are all wild to have you engage them for your trips ? "

My answer was as explained above, that I ever treated them as brothers and men, who, along some lines of education, were more highly taught than I, and that when emergencies arose, I had common sense enough to let those who were best fitted for the crisis, decide what had better be done.

I have nothing but pleasant memories of those faithful men who so well served me through those eventful years of my life. Storms in summer might increase to cyclones, and winter tempests change into fierce, treacherous blizzards, yet their courage never faltered and their resourcefulness never seemed exhausted. No accident seemed to be without some compensation, and no emergency could arise but they seemed

able to overcome it. Then their watchful care over me and unostentatious deeds for my personal safety and comfort were beyond all praise.

Once when crossing a deep bay on Lake Winnipeg with our dogs in November, the ice proved unsafe, and we were all nearly lost in the deep waters into which we were plunged. That night at the camp on Montreal Point, I overheard the following words from the guide, who had that day changed places with a young, inexperienced Indian, who had asked to be allowed to run on ahead and had thus nearly run us all to destruction :

“ You have disgraced us all. Our missionary was nearly drowned. What will the people say when they hear of his narrow escape? We might have been drowned also! Well, what of that? We do not amount to much: but just think of our missionary being in such danger. In future you will stay behind, and I will take good care that his life is not put in such danger again.” And he faithfully kept his word.

This is one example, and with one more instance of their unselfish love, this chapter must close.

It was in summer time, and we were on one of my long toilsome trips to Burntwood River to visit the Nelson River Indians, there camp-

ing. Vast forest fires had ranged through the land, and so everything was black and desolate.

I noticed at dinner one day, as we sat on the smooth rock for our midday meal, that my Indians ate hardly anything. This surprised me, as they, like myself, had such vigorous appetites on those arduous trips in the open air.

When I asked the reason why they were not eating, all the answer I could get out of them was, "Keyam" (never mind).

Thinking they had some good reason which they did not care to disclose, I said nothing more about it until the next meal. Then when I observed that they still refrained from eating, I again inquired the reason and received the same answer, "Keyam! Keyam!"

Knowing something of their natures, I once more refrained from further inquiries.

Next morning they still refused to eat, and began quietly smoking their pipes, while I sat down to the meal prepared for me. Inviting them to begin their breakfast, I was met with the same word, "Keyam."

I confess I was somewhat alarmed, and so, throwing down my knife and fork on the rock, I impulsively said: "It is not 'Keyam.' I want to know what is the matter. If you are

sick tell me; I have medicine, perhaps I can cure you."

Seeing I was resolved not to eat until I had some explanation of their refusal, the older one quietly said :

" Well, missionary, if you must know, it is this. We are passing through this burned country where the fire has destroyed all of the game. There is nothing to shoot and there are no fish that we can obtain in these waters. Our canoe does not hold much food. We do not know when we shall be able to shoot more. What little we have we are keeping for you. We love our missionary too much to let him get hungry. We are both going without that you may have enough. That is all we have to say."

Here these stalwart fellows who were paddling my canoe twelve or fourteen hours a day, were actually starving themselves that the missionary might not be hungry, and it was only with the greatest difficulty that he could get them to reveal the fact!

Yet some folks wonder why I love the Indians. Is it strange, when such instances as the above, of their unselfish, disinterested love, were frequently occurring?



CHAPTER NINETEEN

Why I Gave the Marriage Feast

The sudden marriage of an old couple. Mary's suggestive words.
Old William's shrewdness and the wedding feast.



XIX

" **I**S it not customary now when you have a wedding, to have a wedding feast?"

" Certainly," I replied.

" And is it not expected that the one who gets up the wedding will give the feast?"

" Yes," I answered.

" Well," replied the shrewd, cunning old Indian with a glint of triumph in his eye, " who got up this wedding?"

Thus the old fellow had me, and everybody laughed at my discomfiture, and William's triumph.

So now we must go back and explain how it all happened.

In the wild state of the Indians the marriage ceremonies were very simple affairs. The consent of the fathers, who had the right to sell their daughters to those who brought them a sufficient price, was often all that was considered necessary, and even if the maiden had a lover to whom she was secretly attached it mattered not; if her father had sold her, she was now considered the property of the buyer. Among some of the tribes there would be some little

giving of presents and a marriage feast, but it was not very common.

Among others, there were, in addition to the feast, which often consisted of roasted dogs, attendant ceremonies that were far from being commendable.

At Norway House, where this incident occurred, the early missionaries abolished the selling of the daughters, much to the indignation of some of the old fathers, who, having a goodly number of girls, were looking to their sales for the means of their maintenance. They also saw, as the influences of Christianity spread among the people, the old dog feasts and others about as objectionable, fall into disuse. The people were, however, encouraged to have in connection with the now Christian marriages, a generous hearty feast of the best things their country afforded.

It was in connection with one of these marriages followed by a feast, for which great preparations had long been made, that our incident occurred.

I had nearly finished marrying a couple of fine young Indians of our best families, in the presence of a large crowd in our mission church.

Sitting on the floor, but a few feet from me on the left, were a couple of aged pagan Indians.

The old man was vigorously pulling at his pipe, and, at times, as the ceremony proceeded, he was heard to utter some words of dissent against the whole proceeding.

As I caught some of these words, which seemed to be more growled out than spoken, I waited only until I had completed the marriage ceremony, and then, while the young bride and bridegroom were receiving the congratulations of their friends, I turned rather sharply to the old pagan on the floor and said : "Were you never married with the Book ?" This is the Indian way of describing a Christian marriage.

An emphatic "Numma" (no), was the response.

"Well," I replied, "it is about time you were. How did you get your wife ?"

Giving the old woman who was quietly seated by his side with a blanket wrapped around her, a poke in the ribs with his long pipe stem, he answered :

"I bought her."

"How much did you give for her ?" I asked.

"A gun and two blankets," was the reply, "and it was too much."

Repeating my question I said :

"If you did pay that for her, were you never married with the Book ?"

Again came the decided, "Numma!"

"What is your name?" I asked.

"Jackoose," was the answer.

"Well, I am going to call you William."

Turning to the old wife who sat beside him, I inquired of her what was her name.

"Keseememah," she replied.

"I will call you Mary," I answered.

"Now, William and Mary," I said, "I want you both to stand up here where that young man and woman stood whom you saw me marry."

The young couple and their immediate friends had formed the marriage procession and had gone away to the bride's home where the feast was to be held. Many of the audience who had heard what had passed between the old couple on the floor and myself, becoming interested, had remained, so there was still a good audience.

"Get up and stand here before me," I repeated.

The old woman made no delay, but the old fellow was loth to stir. However, a little more persuasion brought him to his feet, and soon he was in the place designated. After a few preliminary words, I said :

"Please join hands." Not a movement was made.

"Give him your right hand, Mary," I said.

As she held it out to him, William, at first, did not seem to notice it.

"Take hold of her hand with your right hand," I said, perhaps a little sternly.

Reluctantly he complied with my request, but it was in about the same way that a fastidious person would take hold of the tail of a dead fish.

"Grip it right," I said, and he obeyed.

Then I went on with the ceremony and made him promise to love her and to cherish her and to be kind to her, and, well, I made him promise lots of things not in the liturgy.

Then they again joined hands, and Mary responded in her old falsetto voice, but she did not have to say "obey," for I never asked any woman, red, black or white, to say that word. What is the use?

So in due time they were married, but without a ring, as there was not one to be had in that crowd. After the ceremony was over and William and Mary, there standing, were being congratulated by the Indians present, Mary for the first time spoke up, and her words are worth remembering, for while they only caused an Indian "Ugh," from her old husband, they were so suggestive and significant that they brought a mist to my eyes and a lump to my throat.

Looking her husband in the face Mary said, as for the first time she addressed him by the new name I had given him :

" William, that is the first time you ever took my hand in yours and said you loved me."

Some of the audience laughed, and William seemed half annoyed and perhaps a bit angry. But I could not laugh, and as the full significance of all it meant to her dawned on me, I could have wept. Just think of it! She had been his wife for perhaps fifty years. Their children were all grown up and away in wigwams of their own. As when they started life together, they were once more alone. Loyal and true to him, she had endured the summer heat and wintry cold. She had starved, suffered wants innumerable, and had faced death in the blizzard storms and in many other ways. All the drudgery and toil of their hard, sad life had been hers to endure. He would hunt and fish, but absolutely nothing else would he do. And yet through it all, he had never condescended to give her one kind word of cheer or even to assure her of his love.

" You never said that you loved me," and the pitiable old face that bore the scars of many sorrows and hardships, seemed to wail out what had been the pleading heart-longing of half a century.

Oh, husbands and wives, parents and children in ten thousand times ten thousand happy homes, where pure affection dwells, where loving, cheering words are not stinted, where by them many a heavy burden is made light, and many a deep sorrow is chased away, and many a day of gloom becomes bright and radiant, is it not because of the mutual love and affection that there dwells, and that is not afraid to let it now and then be seen and heard?

“Reserve not your kisses for my cold dead brow,
If you have any love for me, let me hear it now.”

These were the thoughts that went surging through me as I mused on old Mary’s words. But they produced not the slightest effect on William, with perhaps the exception of a little annoyance. The astute old fellow was thinking of something else.

After a number had spoken to him, he turned to me and said, as in the beginning of this chapter :

“Missionary?”

“Well, William, what is it?”

“Is it not customary now when you have a wedding to have a wedding feast?”

“Certainly,” I replied.

"And is it not expected that the one who gets up the wedding will give the feast?"

"Yes," I answered.

"Well," replied the sharp old fellow, "who got up this wedding?"

What could I say? The people saw the point, and laughed, and William laughed, as well as he knew how, and when I saw how cleverly he had caught me, I laughed, and my wife who was present and enjoyed my perplexity, why, she laughed and said :

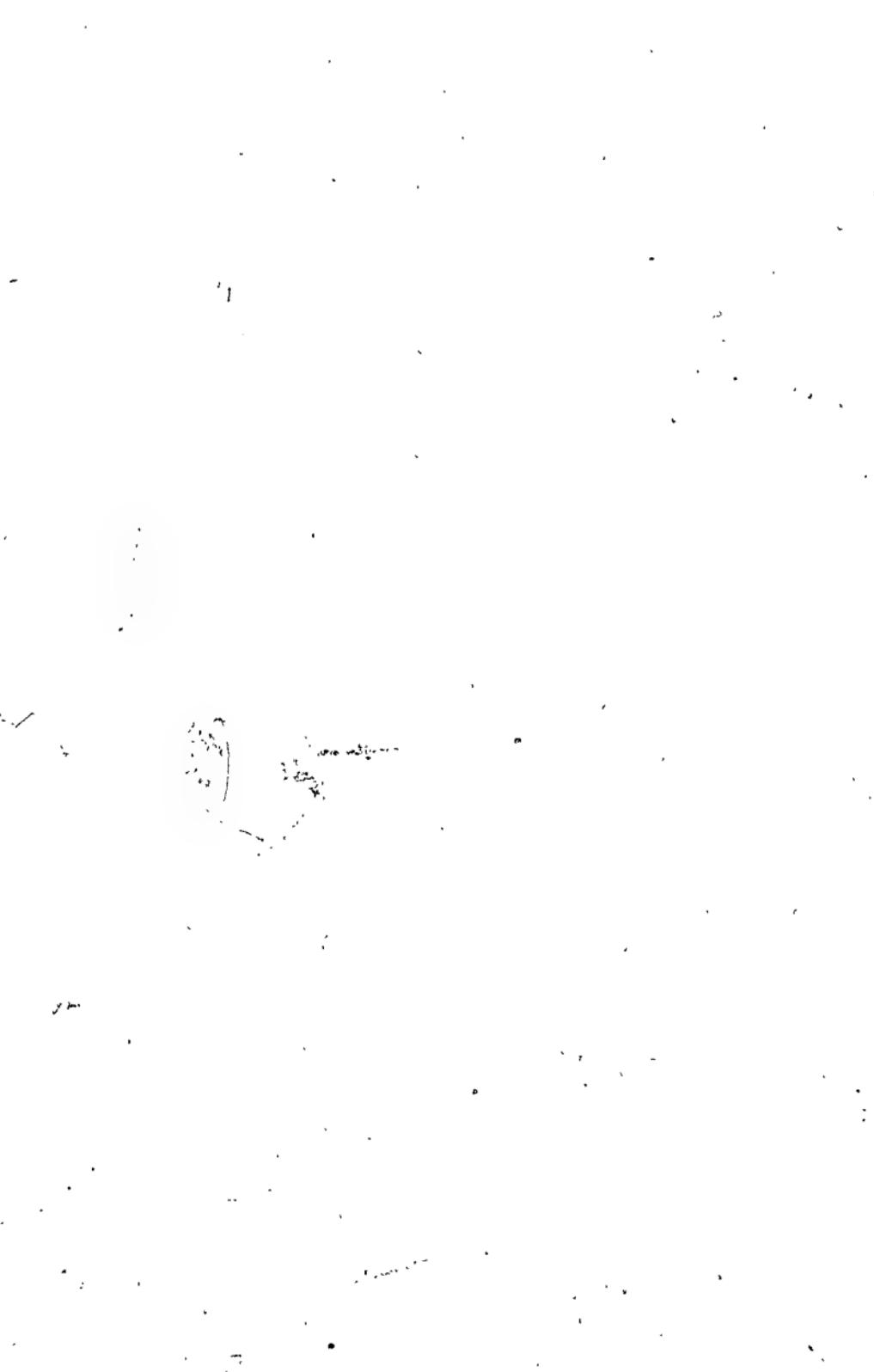
"You have been well caught, Egerton. That was a clever trap William laid for you, and into it you have fallen." Then, good soul that she is, she added :

"You will have to carry out the programme with the old couple. Fortunately we have plenty of food, so bring them into the mission house and we will give them a marriage feast."

Then away she hurried to make the needful preparations.

It did not take long for the news to spread that Okemasquao (Mrs. Young) was busy, with some Indian girls, preparing a wedding feast for old Jackoose, now called William, and Mary. To a wedding feast all the relatives, even to the most remote cousins, are expected to come. It was astonishing, the number who on this oc-

casion claimed to be relatives of William and Mary. And come they did, and although they filled the house we made them all welcome and gave them the best feast possible. All of them in their quiet way seemed very happy, but none more so than old Mary, and her greatest bliss seemed to be that after all these fifty years of life with William, at length she had heard him say that he loved her.



CHAPTER TWENTY

The Sign Language and Pictography

A necessity owing to their diversity of dialects. Not anxious to learn the languages of their enemies. Eager to be adepts in the sign languages. Pictography common to all tribes and much used.



XX

EVERY careful student of the Indians has been impressed with the great number and diversity of their languages.

Not only has every tribe its own language, more or less distinct from that of others, but there may also be in the same tribe a dozen or more dialects, almost unintelligible except to the small bands that use them. This is, perhaps, not to be wondered at when we see, even among great civilized nations, in the course of centuries how diverse become the dialects in different parts of those same nationalities. Take the different counties of England or the provinces of France, for example, and we find strange variations in language. The French inhabitants of Canada are mostly descended from the noblest families of France. Two hundred years ago, or even less, they talked and wrote in that flexible and courtly language as well as the best educated people in France. Now, after a few generations, the patois of the ordinary French Canadian habitant is despised and laughed at in la belle France.

It is, then, no surprise to us that the Indian tribes, destitute of a literature, and widely separated by their wars and the requirements of their hunting, should in time develop such diversities and variations from the original language of the great family from which so many of them sprung.

Take for example the great Algonquin race or tribe.

The Algonquin-speaking people were found occupying America from Labrador to the Rocky Mountains, and from the border land of the Eskimo at Churchill river on the Hudson Bay, south to Pamlico Sound in North Carolina. They became subdivided into many tribes. The Abnaki, Blackfoot, Chippewa, Cree, Delaware, Micmac, Illinois, Massachusetts, Menomonee, Ottawa, and many other Indians, are all of the great Algonquin family. Philologists tell us from the structure of the different languages that they were originally all one. Yet how marvellous is the diversity now. What may be the cause of such a breaking up of the language, we can only conjecture.

It is interesting, also, to note that, with perhaps a few exceptions, the Indians were ever loth to learn the language of any other tribe than their own. This was, perhaps, owing to their

native local pride, and also to the apparent, or assumed contempt which they held for their enemies. As wars were of such frequent occurrence among them, they would doubtless think it beneath their dignity to learn the language of their foes. Neither did they make any effort to master the languages of friendly tribes, whose hunting-grounds bordered on their own. Two tribes might join in an alliance against some common foe, but they would, with but few exceptions, refuse to master each other's language, beyond enough words to carry on the most ordinary conversation. The women would meet each other, or the children would muster and have their plays and mimic hunting-parties for hours together, yet not a word would be spoken by any one in any language but that of his own. Still, anomalous as it may appear, they perfectly understood each other, for all the conversation was carried on in the sign language.

The repugnance of some of the Indians to speaking in any other language than their own was at times surprising to us. Old Mary, the faithful nurse of our children, who went with us for some years into the land of the Saulteaux, could never be induced to speak a word of their tongue. She was a Cree and had some vague memory of evils wrought to her people by the Saulteaux of

generations past, and so she refused to utter a single word of their language. But in the common sign manual she was proficient and had generally no trouble in making herself understood. If any of them were, as she thought, too stupid to read her rapidly made signs, she would pour out her wrath upon them in expressive Cree, with such vigor that they generally fled from her. She had a violent temper and was considered by the Indians as "supernatural," as she had met with an accident that might have been expected to kill her; if she had had a dozen lives, but from which she had strangely recovered. Those superstitious Saulteaux feared her and dared not reply angrily to her; even when she gave them great provocation.

It is an interesting fact that while the spoken languages among these various tribes of the great Algonquin family became so diverse, the sign language seems to have remained practically unchanged. This may have been owing to the fact that there was ever a strong desire among the people to be proficient in its use. The clever exponents of it were highly honored in the great councils where friendly chiefs met from different tribes.

The language of signs is almost universal. Gestures and various significant movements of

different members of the body, even in ordinary, animated conversation, are common to all people. Our French friends and others of the same nervous temperament, seem to outsiders to talk about as much with their hands and shoulders, and even eyebrows, as with their voices. But the genuine sign language of the North American Indians was conducted in as complete silence as that which prevails when deaf mutes are talking with each other. Not a single word was uttered on either side, even in a long conversation. The signs were so complicated that only an expert was able rapidly to converse with another, whether of his own or of a different tribe. Yet every man was supposed to acquire a sufficient knowledge of this universal sign language to carry on any necessary conversation with any Indian whom he might possibly meet, either as he travelled through the country, or was on his own hunting rounds.

The signs used did not indicate words or letters, but each stood for some idea or bit of information. For example, there was a sign that meant "instant attention," another "all is well," another, "you are in great danger," another, "retreat at once," and many others on various subjects.

These experts could ask of each other such

questions as, "Is game plentiful? Have you made a good hunt? Is the chief with you? Are the sick recovering? Will you soon return? Did you meet a wounded bear?" Thus, in the trail, or when passing each other on the lakes or rivers, be two men near or far apart, they could thus converse by signs without uttering a word.

The sense of hearing in some animals is very acute. The stories that the hunters tell of the powers of hearing as well as scent possessed by many of the denizens of the forest are almost incredible; so it is very convenient on a hunting expedition to be able to converse in utter silence.

The distance at which experts could, in this mute way, communicate with each other, of course depended much on their powers of vision and the clearness of the atmosphere. Living, as most of these Indian tribes did, in lands where fogs and mists were almost unknown, and with powers of vision that seem almost incredible to a white man, they were quite able, by freely using their arms, as well as their weapons if need be, to communicate at distances far greater than those at which the human voice, under ordinary conditions, would be intelligible. This was especially true in a hilly or mountainous country, where their forms stood out in bold relief.

The study of the pictography of the Indians is also interesting. Some simple marks in the snow or on the sands that seem to the casual observer as insignificant, may contain much information.

For example, I was once travelling with my dog trains, in winter, through a forest region, where the snow was very deep. Our route was due north. About noon we struck the trail of another party of travellers who had been going due west. They were aware of our coming from the south, and that we would cross their trail at this place, so the Indian guide had left a sign for our information. It was a simple little thing to me, and I was as ignorant after having had my attention called to it, as before, until it was explained to me. It was only a mark of about a third of a circle made in the snow, running east and west. Then, from the centre, another mark had been deeply traced diverging a little to the west of north. This was all that I could see or comprehend. And yet, to my Indians there was the information that at about eleven o'clock in the forenoon two days before, that party had passed along the trail.

When they told me they had thus read the sign, of course I asked for an explanation.

This the guide readily gave me. He said the

circular mark in the snow represented the course of the sun in the sky. When this was made, then, at the point where the straight line joined the circular one, a stick was placed perfectly upright. With another stick the straight line in the snow was made, exactly where the shadow of the first stick fell. If it had been twelve o'clock, the shadow would have been in the centre of the part circle. But as it was not yet noon, the shadow fell a little to the west, where it would be as we saw, at about eleven o'clock. The signs being made, the sticks were thrown away.

"But how do you know that it is two days since the party passed by?" I asked.

There was a faint smile at my ignorance, but the Indians were too polite to laugh at me. At once the guide, taking his hand out of his great glove, with his naked fingers pressed the snow that had been disturbed in the making of the marks, and showed me how it had gradually hardened, saying :

"It has just hardened that much in two days."

Of course I looked very wise and thanked him for his information, but I confess it was beyond my comprehension.

Among an active, busy people, possessing no written language, and often living apart from

each other on account of the necessities of their lives as hunters, it was absolutely essential that there should be some way by which they could impart to each other information as to their movements and plans.

In drawing III we have grouped some signs that are at once intelligible.

In this first the family says :

(1) "We have gone away for an uncertain time, and the stick points along the trail the direction in which we have gone."

(2) "We have gone away for a short time, less than half of a day. This is indicated by the distance the small stick is placed from the end stuck in the snow or ground."

(3) This one says : "We have gone away for the whole day."

(4) The last one says : "We have gone away for five days." The rising sun indicates that in each case the family or persons making the journey had left in the morning.

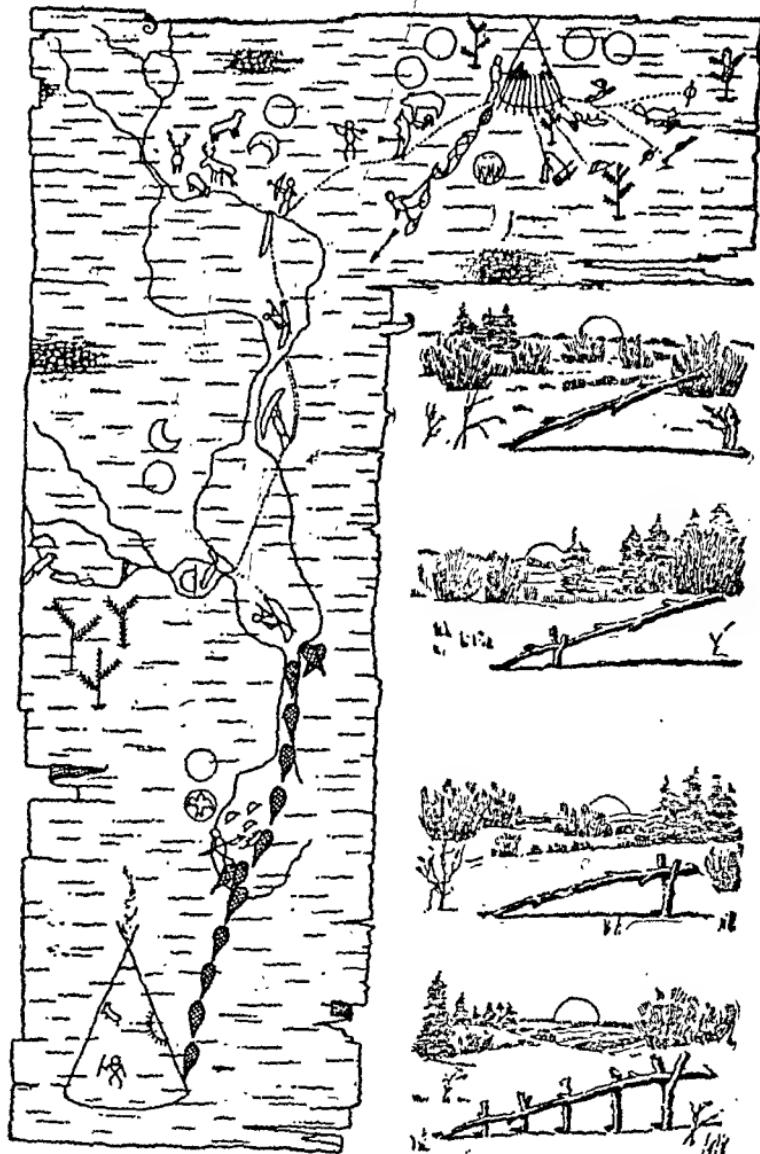
This pictographic art, in more or less elaborateness, was common among many tribes. In many cases there was a considerable amount of skill, as well as ingenuity, displayed in conveying the information which they wished to impart.

The subjects which they illustrated were ex-

ceedingly varied. Some native artists had ambition or conceit enough to prompt them to soar into the regions of the supernatural and endeavor to picture scenes unknown to ordinary mortals. Dreams would be pictured out with marvellous elaborateness.

I well remember, when a boy, gazing with a strange fascination akin to horror, at a most extraordinary pictographic work of a Mohawk or Muncey Indian.

It was given to my mother, who, for some years before her marriage, was a mission teacher among the Indians. It was supposed to represent a dream or trance into which this Indian fell, and in which he remained for some time. The first thing he did after recovering consciousness was to ask for a pen, ink and paper. He was unable to write, but had always been clever at pictographic work. He had renounced the paganism of his people some time before, had become a zealous Christian, and was naturally very anxious to see the rest of the Indians follow his example. The early missionaries did not mince matters in their earnest preaching. If there was a heaven to be gained, there was a hell to be shunned. And if heaven was a place of rare delights and pleasures, so hell was the region of horrors and miseries.



(Drawing IV, page 295)

THE STORY OF A FAMOUS
HUNTER'S JOURNEY

(Drawing III, page 293)

LEAVING WORD AT HOME AS TO
DIRECTION OF JOURNEY AND
ITS LENGTH



To the Indian converts, as well as to the whites of those days, these things were tremendous realities. They accepted them and believed them. And so this Indian-made picture, which my mother possessed for years, depicted the enjoyments and happy occupations of the saved, but with a vividness and variety that would satisfy the most fastidious Indian. On the other hand, the scenes of misery and suffering were so diverse and unique that Michael Angelo in his picture of the Last Judgment, or Dante in his Inferno, could have found from them additional subjects for brush or pen.

But coming back from these more ambitious subjects which at times engrossed the attention and drew out the skill and ingenuity of the native artists, we find that it was generally in connection with the ordinary routine of life that their pictographs, simple or elaborate, were made. The one given here (in drawing IV) is practically the history of the doings of a famous hunter for nine or ten months of the year: that is, as the Indians would put it, from the eagle moon, called by the Crees—Mikisew pesim—corresponding to our March, when he leaves his wigwam home, and begins his hunting career. We can trace him in his various movements and tell where he is during each month, as well as

see the character of the hunting in which he is engaged.

From the birch bark, on which with the pale-face's "talking-stick," the pen, the whole was drawn, the story is so intelligible to his Indian friends, that not a single word is necessary.

What a benediction it would be to celebrities who are hunted after by interviewers if this plan were to become common. Fancy some great man, when assailed by the knights of the quill, gravely taking down a roll of birch bark covered with hieroglyphics, gravely handing it over to them and saying: "Gentlemen, here are the records of my doings, translate them as suits yourselves." Each reporter might honestly read as they impressed him, and thus escape the charge of falsification.

For the information of our readers not as yet posted in Indian wood-craft and sign-reading, we will here give the reading, or translation, of this rather good specimen of Indian pictography.

The Indian hunter leaves his wigwam in the Eagle moon. He travels for the first two moons on snow-shoes. During those two moons he spends his time principally on a lake, where we see him breaking into the little houses of the muskrats and spearing them. This occupies his

time until May, when, in that land, the snow, and ice melt away. Now we see him embarking in his canoe and paddling to the side of another lake, where he finds a stream entering into it on which is a large beaver pond and house. This is worth much to him, so we see by the whole and half moon that he spends about six weeks hunting beaver in these streams.

When the beaver season is over he starts on again in his canoe. He crosses the lake diagonally and finds that the great river which is its outlet is so swift and full of rapids that he must make a long portage. So here we see him with his canoe on his head, travelling along the side of the dangerous river until, below the rapids or falls, he finds that the water is safe. The double dots indicate that he had to go back again, doubtless for his pack of beaver skins, his gun, and his travelling outfit.

Again we see him in his canoe, emerging out of the river into a large lake. Now he is among the deer, one of which we see him shooting. While this one was killed on land doubtless he killed many in the water, as there they love to go to swim and get rid of the flies that so trouble them.

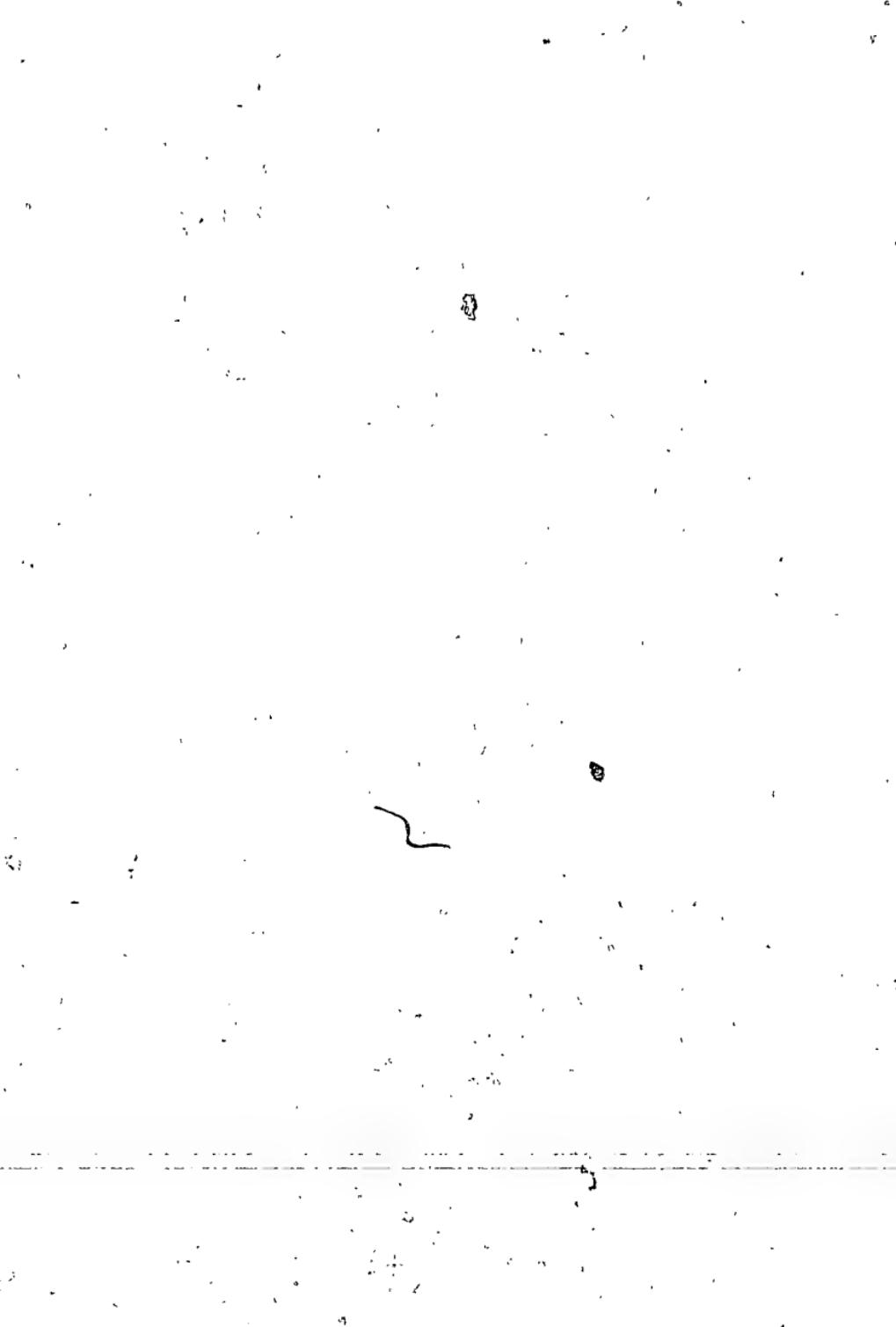
Here the hunter spent six weeks. This was to secure enough venison which he dried, or

made into pemmican, on which to live while he should be hunting the fur-bearing animals in the winter. Next, we find him among the bears, one of which he has badly wounded with an arrow and is about to kill with his spear. The bears must have been numerous there that year, as our hunter spends two moons hunting them.

When his bear hunting is ended, for by this time those who have escaped from him are denned up for the winter, he makes a long journey far away into the forest country, where the rich fur-bearing animals are to be found. Here he builds himself a warm hunting-lodge, for the cold weather has now come again. This bitter weather is the time when the mink and marten, the silver fox and ermine and other valuable furs are in their prime. So, to secure them, our hunter here lives all alone for at least two moons.

The dried meat of the deer and the bears which he killed, with what rabbits he can snare, is all he has in the way of food. He is in danger of being killed by wolves which there abound. The cunning wolverines often destroy the game in his traps. He is exposed to many dangers, but he has overcome or escaped them all, and now, as the last thing to read, we see that he has

prepared a light, strong birch sled, and loading on it his furs and outfit he puts on a new pair of snow-shoes which he has made, and with a glad heart he starts off for his distant home.



CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

Indian Credulity and Incredulity

An amusing steamboat experience. Doubts as to the earth being round. Interesting experiments to overcome their incredulity.
"All very great liars."



XXI

THE story-teller is very popular among the Indians, and most implicitly is he believed so long as he confines his narrative to myths and legends and tales of the supernatural. The most marvellous feats of Misha wabus, Jouske-ha, Nanahboozhoo, Hiawatha, and other creations of the vivid imagination, part human and part supernatural, are all accepted in perfect faith. The stories of the Weedegoss or Windegoos cannibals, man eaters that can extend themselves until they are as high as the highest pine trees, or can squeeze themselves down until they are but small dwarfs of hideous aspect, but ever on the lookout for human feasts, are believed in by multitudes of red men.

And yet, no people with whom we have ever come in contact are slower to accept the truthfulness of statements made either by members of their own race, or of the white man, of things or events that they, personally, have not seen or comprehended.

So it is with them in reference to many of the ordinary affairs of life. They commission a

friend to transact some business at a distant place, or perform some work which, in their own mind, can be accomplished. Unforeseen difficulties arise and the work cannot be done. Instead of accepting the explanation, in all probability the Indian who requested the work will shrug his shoulders with contempt, and accuse the man, to his face, as a liar.

I had an emphatic evidence of this Indian characteristic, once, in my own case.

It was in the early days of my work among the Saulteaux Indians, in what was known then as the Hudson Bay Territories. I had gone twice a year to visit a band of Indians who lived some hundreds of miles from my home. They had become deeply interested in the message and longed to have a missionary dwell among them. So importunate, at length, did they become, that one summer when I had been unable to visit them on account of other duties, they sent a deputation of several of their number to plead for a missionary. I met them kindly, talked over the matter with them, and said I would send on their request for a missionary to the mission rooms in Toronto. This I faithfully did, and added my own pleadings to their request.

But alas, there came back the cold reply, that

there were no volunteers for such places, and if there had been, there was no money in the treasury with which to send them. Of course I was grieved at this, and felt that I could at that time do no more.

The next summer we were not much surprised when, in a couple of large canoes, there arrived the same deputation with ample provision made to carry back with them their missionary. With but little delay they came into our mission home and at once demanded him.

I felt the position keenly, but was helpless before them. All that I could do was to tell these eager, expectant men that I had sent on their request and added my own to it, but the answer was that there were no missionaries for them. Looking me in the face, the principal man of the party, with no anger, but with deep disappointment and a certain amount of incredulity in his voice, said :

“Missionary, you tell a lie!”

Understanding, as I did, his feelings, I was neither angry nor annoyed at his accusation, but I was deeply humiliated, for I felt that that Indian, with his strong accusation, was the mouth-piece of millions in darkness, accusing the Christian Church not only of apathy and neglect, but of hypocrisy and untruthfulness, when, with all

its claims to be of God, designed for the world's evangelization, it dares to say, even to these poor Indian suppliants: "There is no missionary for you."

To save this Indian from the reaction which I feared would come and drive him back to the old ways and the spell of the conjurer, or into a state of perfect indifferentism, I showed him the letters which had come about the matter, and then I told him of what was being done in many other places, and that they must be patient and hope that at some time in the future, a missionary would be sent to them.

But how mean and small and contemptible I felt in my own eyes, as I went on praising the church for what it was doing, in comparison with what I knew it might do! May God forgive me and others, who, in similar circumstances, have been placed in such a position that we really found ourselves as special pleaders for the Universal Church of Christ, when in our heart of hearts we felt that there was more of sham and hypocrisy in our words than of candid, transparent honesty! But this was not what I had in my mind when I began to write this chapter. The credulity and the incredulity of the Indians was my theme.

So well aware are they, among themselves, of

their inherent unwillingness to believe the strange and improbable, unless it is associated with the supernatural, that there is a great hesitancy on the part of those, who, by travelling to distant places or associating with white people, have really become possessed of information on new and startling subjects, to impart that knowledge to their own people on their return. They well know that their veracity will at once be questioned, and they themselves be held up as objects of ridicule, and this to an Indian is a bitter humiliation.

The following incident is a good illustration. Many years ago I came down from Burntwood River, beyond Split Lake on Nelson River, with a number of Indians who wished to meet the late Dr. Punshon, Senator Macdonald and other high officials who were visiting Winnipeg, to plead with them for a missionary. This was long ago when that country was but little opened up. It was still the wild west of the Indian and the buffaloes.

An occasional flat-bottomed steamer came down the river from some far away American towns, with freight and passengers. As my Indians had never seen a steamboat, I asked permission of the captain, with whom I was well acquainted, to bring these big red men from the

interior to see the boat. He very cheerfully consented and said that he was going down the river a few miles to load up with wood, and that I could take them along for the trip. I had them all on board in good time and away we started. They were delighted and made some quaint remarks. It was easy to see that they were interested and were studying the boat. I said to them: "Use your eyes well, for this is a new thing to you. Here is this iskatao cheman (fire canoe), that moves along without oar or paddle or sail."

Their quick reply was: "We have noticed that, and have decided that it is the current that is carrying us along." I threw some pieces of wood and bark overboard and said:

"Look at those things and see how we are rapidly leaving them behind. Where is your current now?" Indian-like they would not be convinced, and answered:

"Yes, we see that, and we have decided that there is a heavy undercurrent that is taking us on so rapidly."

They were Indians and so I argued no more with them just then. We reached the landing place where the many cords of wood were piled, awaiting shipment.

In return for their free ride I asked my men

to help the crew in loading on the wood. With a rush they were off, and worked splendidly.

I waited and watched them until the steamer turned round, and then, against a brisk head-wind and the current, began rapidly making her way back to Winnipeg. It was most amusing to study the faces of those men. They rushed from side to side and from stem to stern on the steam-boat. Then, a good deal subdued in spirit and now thoroughly bewildered, they were willing to listen to me without once contradicting. After showing them the engine and then the furnaces which, as they said, were rapidly eating up the wood they had helped to put on board, I took them to the stern and showed them the connecting bars from the engine to the paddle wheels, and told them it was steam that made the power by which we were now moving along independent of current or wind or oar. As they now saw it for themselves, they were of course convinced.

Afterwards, in conversation with them on the many new things they had seen, I said :

" You will have many things to talk about when you get home and to tell your fathers and brothers and friends. And," I added, " I want you especially to tell them all about the iskatao cheman, the fire canoe."

Quickly speaking up the oldest of them said :

"We have decided to say nothing about the iskatao cheman."

"Why?" I asked.

His answer was: "They will never believe us, but will say, 'You all very great liars.'"

That this characteristic of doubt is strongly ingrained in the race was seen even after many of them had accepted Christianity. It lingered still and there were various instances where it showed itself, but it generally gave more amusement than trouble.

It was satisfactory to note that speedily, under Christian teaching, they gave up their belief in their myths and windegoos and only rarely could be persuaded to rehearse any of their old stories, once so popular and so implicitly believed, unless by special request or to amuse some interested children.

Yet the tendency to question what seemed strange and improbable, even if uttered by those in whom they had all confidence, would occasionally crop out in ways that were as startling as unexpected.

A missionary at Oxford House had had much success in his work among the Indians, and even had some so advanced that they were able to do good work as lay helpers and local preachers among their countrymen. So long as they con-

fined their preaching and teaching to the simple facts of the gospel and to the story of their conversion and what it had been to them and others who had accepted it, they were on safe ground and most effective. But the trouble with some of them was that they were ambitious to launch out into the depths, and that they endeavored to clear up mysteries that had come to them, perhaps from the instructive sermon of the missionary. One native helper felt called upon, when he addressed the same audience which had been spoken to by the missionary, to correct, for the enlightenment of the people, the mistakes of the white man.

What can be more deliciously cool and amusing than the following !

Fancy the scene ! A modest, little, log church with two or three hundred Indians reverently assembled for worship, and among them are seated the missionary and his family. The day is bitterly cold, but a square Carron well supplied with fuel makes everybody warm and comfortable. The Indian speaker is a man beloved and honored for his clean life and transparent honesty. He is a great friend of the missionary, whom he himself adores, so much so that he cannot let anything pass unchallenged that might seem to lessen the minister's influence

among the people. This day it is evident that he is troubled and that there is a burden on his heart. Things have been said by the missionary that he cannot believe, and so he thinks the rest of the people believe them not, and are probably questioning the truthfulness of their beloved missionary. He has resolved to face the matter and get things straightened out as soon as possible.

The opening part of the service is gone through with Indian reverence and solemnity. Then the text is announced. The sermon has an odd beginning. The speaker says:

"Brothers, did our ears deceive us? I fear not, for many of you heard as I did. Our loved missionary has made a great mistake, which I must correct. He said the world was round! What an absurdity! What a blunder! Why, we all know that it is not round. It is as flat as the top of that big stove there before me. It may not be smooth, as it has its hills and mountains, its valleys and lakes, but as that big iron stove top, although rough and not smooth, is still flat, so is it with this earth."

"The earth round! How absurd! If it were, how quickly would our beautiful Oxford Lake, and great Winnipeg, and even the great Hudson Bay, which we see when we go with

the brigades each summer, run off and disappear!

"No, our loved missionary only made a mistake, and so I hasten to correct it and relieve your minds."

The experience of a number of officers of the American army after one of the periodical risings of the wild Sioux Indians in Dakota and Minnesota, was amusing, even if not very satisfactory. After much bloodshed and trouble the Indians had been thrashed into subjection. To prevent any further outbreaks on their part, it was thought that the sending of a delegation of some of the most influential chiefs to Washington and to other great cities, and giving them, by personal observation, some idea of the might and power and numbers of the whites, would be a kind of education that would show them and their people, to whom on their return they could communicate what they had seen, the utter folly of the Indians' thinking that they could successfully contend in warfare against a people so numerous and powerful.

The idea was carried out. The great chiefs were taken on this tour of observation which lasted several months. They were, of course, deeply impressed with what they saw, and as their white guides and directors, who were off-

cers of the army, supposed, were treasuring up in their minds much to talk about when they returned to their brother warriors and friends in the northwest.

In due time the return trip was made. They travelled by railroad to St. Paul. Here they were met and escorted by their officers and soldiers, with whom they had now become great friends, a long distance out on the prairies. When the place where they were to separate was reached, it was decided that here, before the final parting between the whites and Indians, a formal council should be held.

The council opened with great decorum. The pipe of peace went its rounds and was smoked by all.

The senior officer present opened the talk. What he said was to this effect :

"Now, Chiefs and Warriors! At the expense of the nation we have given you the treat of this great journey. We hope you have all enjoyed it and will never forget what you have seen and heard!"

A general chorus of: "How! How!" was the grateful response of the chiefs.

"Now we wish you to understand that one reason why we took you on this long journey, was that when you returned you would gather

your warriors and people around you, and tell them of these things that you have seen and heard, and warn them of the consequences which will follow if any of them go on the war path again.

"Will you tell them that the white people are very numerous and powerful?"

"O yes, because we have seen the crowds."

"What will your people say?"

"They will say that we are big liars."

"Well, you must tell them that the white people have railroads and that you have travelled on them, and if they cause any more trouble the soldiers will come on these railroads as fast as the wild geese fly, to punish them. Will you tell them this?"

"Yes," glumly replied the chiefs. "But they will only say again that we are big liars."

Thus it went on. Vainly the officers urged upon these chiefs to try to impress their warriors with the size of the cannon that could be used against them, and the multitudes of soldiers who would come and punish them if they again rose up in warfare.

The chiefs listened and smoked and said but little, and the burden of that little was:

"Our people have not, as we have, seen these things, and so they will say, 'you have been to

us as bad medicine, and now you are great liars."

As the council was about closing, one of the chiefs, pointing to the telegraph wires strung on the poles near by, said to an officer:

"What are those things for, which we have seen all over the land?"

"Is it possible that you have not been told what those are for?" asked the officer.

"No," replied the chief.

"Well, now, I will tell you, and I want you all to listen very carefully to my words. Those are called telegraph wires, and they run, among many other places, from near your reservation, direct to the great Father, the President in Washington, and on them it is possible for the man in charge to talk with the President. And he can do it so quickly that while he is at this end talking with a little instrument he uses, the President can hear him at the other end in Washington. So if there is any trouble among the Indians, the man can send the news so fast that word can come to the soldiers that very day to go and punish the bad Indians who were beginning the trouble."

The only answer the Indians first gave was a look of amused incredulity.

"Will you tell them that?" said the officer.

"No, indeed!" was chorused by the chiefs.

"Why not?"

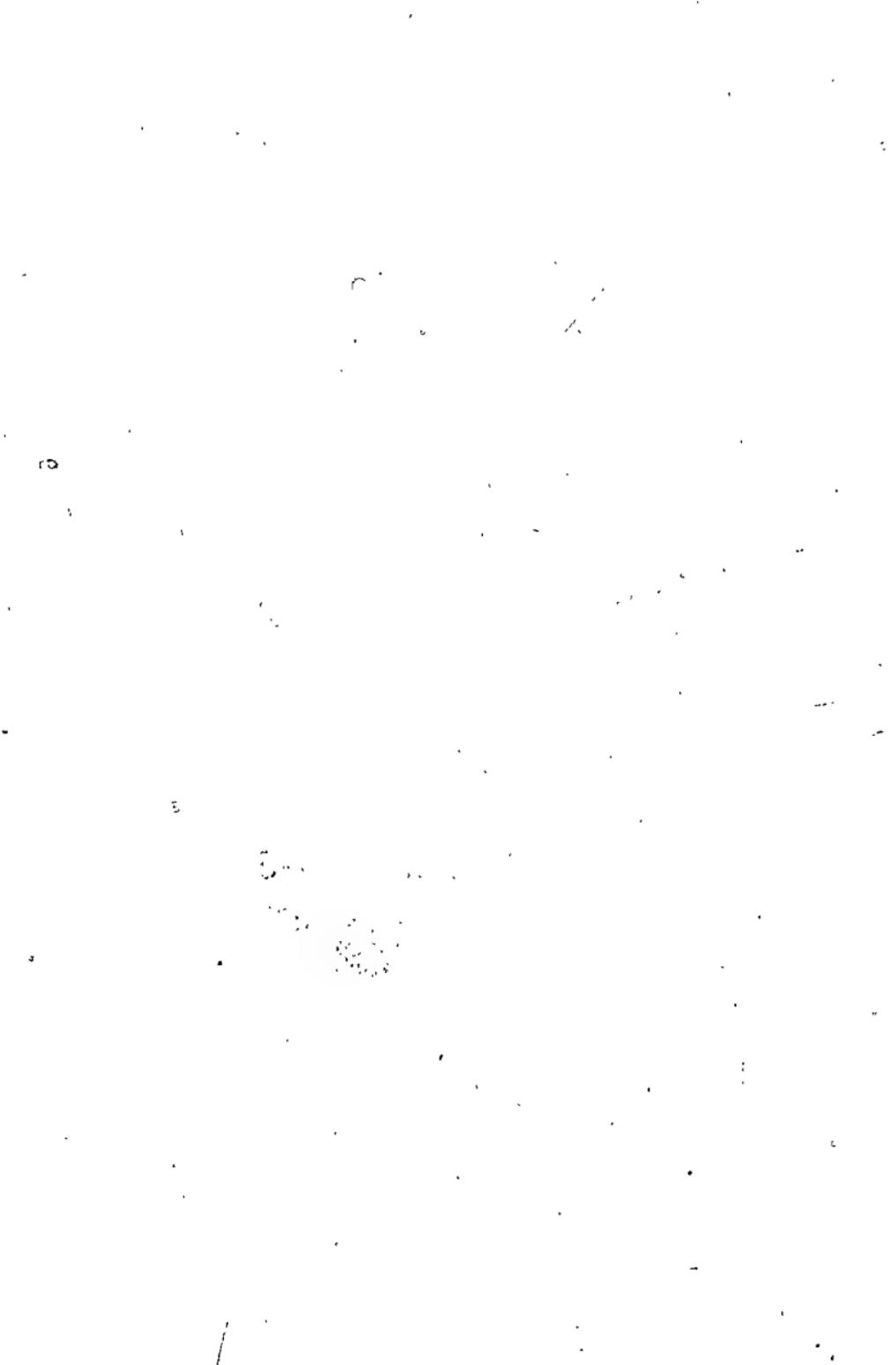
"Because they would laugh at us and say that we were indeed big liars. And," added the chiefs, "we don't believe it either, and now we, too, think you all very great liars!"



CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

Indian Honesty or the Story of Koostawin

A national characteristic. The thief despied. Honesty of the hunters proverbial. Game never taken. Traps reset. Draconian law. Death the old penalty for stealing. The story of Koostawin, the thief.



XXII

THE honesty of the Indians ere they are spoiled by contact with unprincipled whites, has ever been a matter that has attracted attention and won the admiration of those who have made the subject one of study and investigation.

In our own long years of abode among them we were gratified and pleased with this admirable characteristic. Living, as we did, hundreds of miles from the nearest magistrate or policeman, and yet with the doors and windows never locked or bolted, with nothing under lock or key, and yet never having had anything worth a shilling stolen from us, was pretty conclusive evidence of the honesty of the people of an Indian village of over a thousand inhabitants.

When among them, I succeeded in making a fairly good garden, in which I raised, among other things, some fine turnips and carrots. These the Indian boys soon learned to like to eat even in their raw state, as much as a white boy with a good appetite enjoys an apple or an orange. The fence surrounding the garden was

made of some slim poplar poles, yet the boys who could, without touching a rail, easily jump over that fence, were never known to touch a thing in the garden without permission. Needless to say that most of my turnips and carrots went to the boys and the girls, for it was a pleasure to give to such honest children what they, in their often half-starved lives, so dearly loved.

Once when travelling with a party of my own Indians, we reached the settlement of another tribe and camped near a trail, along which many Indians unknown to us were continually passing. My men were possessed of some very valuable articles of apparel, beautifully worked in beads and silk. Noticing the careless way in which they were leaving their much prized articles lying around, I said : " Men, do be more careful of these valuable things of yours, or you will surely have them stolen."

Fancy my feelings, when the principal owner quickly spoke up and said :—

" O there is not the slightest danger. You are the only white man within sixty miles of us ! "

An officer of the Mounted Police reported that when escorting a supply of provisions to a remote station, a large side of bacon slipped off from the pack on the back of a horse. As it

was near night when the loss was discovered and there was but little possibility of finding the article in the darkness, it was decided to push on and not try to regain it. To the great surprise of the officer, the next day an Indian appeared with the missing bacon. He had found it and had hurried over thirty miles to restore it to its owners.

An Indian guide once asked a white gentleman for some tobacco. The gentleman, who had the habit of carrying his finely cut up tobacco in his pocket, took out a large handful and gave it to him. Soon after the Indian returned and handed him some small pieces of silver, saying that he had found them in the tobacco.

The white man, much surprised at his honesty, said :—

“ Why did you not keep the money ? no one would have known anything about it ! ”

The Indian drew himself up and answered :—

“ Indian ask white man for tobacco and get it. White man give Indian money by mistake. If Indian keep that money, he impose on his friend. He no do that, which would have been meaner than to steal, which Indian never do.”

It is to be regretted that many of the Indians, while learning from civilization much of value

to them, have also contracted some of the weaknesses and sins of the worst of the white race and have lost that splendid, almost universal, record for honesty which they once held. It is to be deeply regretted that many of them have become dishonest and the question naturally arises: why should it have become so?

At the many flourishing missions there are still the same high ideals and the same honesty of life among the great majority of red men. Why, then, they are not all honest, as they were once believed so universally to be, is an interesting study and one which we think admits of a clear explanation. Those not under the kindly education of Christian teaching, but who are led into evil by their unfavorable surroundings, fall into habits of dishonesty as well as into other sins, because of the absence of certain restraints under which they were obliged to live when in their former tribal relationship as members of Indian communities. While, apparently, there was not much semblance of law, and some of the chiefs did not seem to have much influence, yet there were some unwritten laws which were universally known, and the punishment for the breaking of which was so relentless and terrible that all were ever on their guard to escape from even being suspected of transgression. To rob a

hostile warrior or his horse, or even to take his scalp, was ever considered the correct thing to do, but to steal anything from one's own tribe, or from a tribe with which there was no quarrel, met with the antipathy and disgust of fellow warriors and was followed by the prompt and merciless punishment of the perpetrator of the deed.

The following interesting story of the sudden and, to many, the mysterious death of Koostawin, will throw a good deal of light on this interesting phase of Indian character.

Koostawin came out from the Indian Reserve in the Red River country, the year after the great flood, which is still talked about, although it occurred about the middle of the last century. The great Red River of the North so overflowed its banks that the waters rolled over the great prairies on either side like inland seas. The homesteads of many of the Selkirk settlers were swept away. Houses, barns, stables, haystacks were lifted by the remorseless, rising waters, and floated down and disappeared in the great Lake Winnipeg.

The Indian Reserve, near the mouth of the great river, if possible suffered more than did the settlements of the whites farther up the stream.

So discouraged and disheartened were many

of the Indians at the loss of their farming outfit, that they resolved to give up their attempts at trying the white man's way of making a living by farming, and to go north, and again, as did their fathers, live by hunting and fishing.

Quite a number of families went as far north as Norway House. The story of their losses by the great flood had preceded them, so they were welcomed by the red men of that north country, who were members of the same tribe.

They came poor and destitute, but no Indian starves among his own people so long as there is any food in the community. As soon as possible they obtained twine from the fur traders, and without delay the nimble fingers of the industrious women wove it into the nets for the purpose of securing supplies of the savory white fish, which ~~they~~ abounded there. Traps were also secured in as great numbers as possible, and the old, established hunters, with the traditional nobleness of the true red man, generously divided their hunting grounds with the newcomers.

For a time all went well. When success attended the huntings of the newcomers, and they returned to the village laden down with their packs of beaver, otter, mink and bearskins, there was general rejoicing at the good luck that was attending their efforts. The exchange of these

rich furs for the goods of the fur traders soon began to bring comfort and happiness to those who had been reduced to absolute want by the great flood. Others, hearing of their success, followed them, and so for some years there were accessions to their numbers.

Then trouble began. The majority of the people knew not what it was, and yet all felt that there was something strange and mysterious, like a miasma, in the air. Frequent councils were being held. The hearty good-will and open candor that had so long obtained among them, in some mysterious way changed into reserve, and in some cases into actual suspicion. Yet nothing was openly charged against any one, for Indians are men of few words and impassive demeanor.

Koostawin was a big, stalwart Indian. He had come out as one of the first company that had suffered by the flood. He told a pitiable story, and so was well helped by the northern red men. But they soon got tired of helping him, for he was lazy. Even when they loaned him nets, he preferred lounging and smoking in their wigwams and eating the fish and game they caught, rather than going out hunting and fishing for himself.

Indians are very patient and indulgent, so

they put up with the laziness of Koostawin for a long time. When they did speak, it was in a way that had but one meaning. Then a great change took place in him. He seemed at once to shake off his indolence, and began to work most industriously. First of all he built himself a wigwam. This he placed several hundreds of yards away from his nearest neighbor. He then caught for himself quite a supply of white fish, which he piled up on a staging above the reach of wild thievish huskie dogs. These fish soon froze so solid that they kept fresh and good for months.

Koostawin lived all alone. His wife had left him before he came out from Red River, because of his laziness and other faults which she said he had, but which she, as his wife, would not disclose.

When the lakes and rivers were all frozen over, and the fishing had ended, on account of the thickness of the ice, then the huntings for the rich fur-bearing animals began.

Koostawin was observed to go away into the deep forests and be gone for days. Yet he was never seen to have any traps with him, he was seen to carry only his gun. As he very seldom returned without bringing back some beautiful otters, or mink, or other rich furs, the Indians

said among themselves that Koostawin must be very clever in making deadfalls and snares, for it was noticed at the Trading Post, where he exchanged his furs for goods, that none of them were injured by either ball or shot. So it was evident that he had not used his gun in securing them.

The laws of the Indians in reference to their hunting-grounds are well understood. No true Indian would ever think of appropriating the catch of another. If, in going to his own hunting-grounds; he has to pass by the traps of another Indian, he would never think of carrying away any animal he might see in those traps, but the well-understood law is, that it is his duty to take the animal out of the trap, for fear it might be destroyed by wolverines. He is expected to hang it up in plain sight, and in a manner that will render it secure from any prowling animals. Then, in addition, he is expected to reset the trap, even if he has to use bait from his own, it may be, very limited supply. For doing this all the reward he expects is that perhaps at some time in the future, a hunter passing near one of his traps, in which a valuable animal is caught, will do the same thing for him.

This has been the custom ingrained into the

very life of these northern Indians. But now they are troubled, for a spirit of suspicion and unrest is in the air.

It is hard work, for their nature is reserved as we have mentioned, to get anybody to talk. The chief, at length coming from council, mentions the matter to the missionary, and alone with him we listen, as with bated breath he reveals to us what is the cause of the disquietude, which gives him much sorrow.

Things that have been unknown for many winters are occurring. Hunters are telling him of suspicious footsteps around their traps, and evidences that animals caught have been taken out of them, and that neither by wolf nor wolverine. Traps have even been found reset, with the fur of some animal attached to the teeth.

Others have reports, equally convincing, that their traps have been interfered with, and that in their resetting there is such an absence of the usual cleverness characterizing the experienced hunter, that it is evident some one unaccustomed to this kind of hunting is at work.

Matters reach a climax when an experienced hunter comes in with the story that a silver fox with only three feet, has been taken out of his trap. Here we see the powers of observation that these children of nature possess. This hunter

had before this seen by the impression left by the trail of a fox, that he had lost a foot. In following up the trail, he found that the animal had been caught in one of his traps. But when he arrived there the captured animal was nowhere to be seen. However, some large snow-shoe tracks told the tale that a man had been there and that he had removed the fox and reset the trap, while the hairs on the teeth of the trap told that it was a silver fox of great value.

Koostawin is now put under the eyes of some alert watchers, and by them he is observed to sell to the fur traders a very valuable silver fox skin, and the alert eyes of the Indians notice the absence in the skin of one of the legs. So valuable is this fur that every bit, even down to the toes, is saved.

Another secret council is held. Prudent and cautious are the Indians, and so desirous are they not to blame any one until they are absolutely sure of his guilt, because the punishment that will follow will be swift and complete, they resolve to withhold their vengeance and get additional proof.

So out from that midnight council go some of the aged men and arouse from their slumbers a number of trusted young hunters of the village. What the ceremony was through which they were

put, we never learned, but this we did discover, they were divided into small groups and to them was committed the sternest of orders to keep Koostawin under their surveillance. They were to know without a break, positively, where he was every hour of the day and night. And yet they were not to let him get the slightest hint that he was being watched, or even suspected of any wrong-doing.

Remembering that Koostawin was himself a cunning Indian, suspicious and wary on account of his wrong-doings, we see this was no easy matter.

However, they succeeded at length in establishing his guilt, although it was not for some time, as the proceeds of the sale of the silver fox skin, furnished him with supplies that lasted him for weeks. He was noticed one stormy night, to steal quietly away from his wigwam and disappear in the dark forest. Noiselessly was he followed, and that in a way that would have been utterly impossible on the part of a white man. During the whole of the day following watchers were observing his movements as he hurried along different hunter's trails, hoping that the falling snow would cover up his tracks. He was fairly successful in his dishonest work, and several valuable animals were

taken from different traps. Keen eyes saw each capture, and also observed the hurried way in which he reset the traps, despoiled of their victims.

Not the slightest effort was made to arrest him in his dishonest work. Indians, in their native state, did not punish in that way. Koostawin was not even disturbed on his return journey. He leisurely sauntered into his wigwam, apparently unnoticed. But his doom was sealed. That night another council was held and the reports of the watchers were received. Then they were dismissed, as their work was done.

At midnight, or after, a secret council, consisting only of the chiefs and the old men, who had in their hands the chief responsibility of the tribe, was held. To it was called the dreaded medicine man of the tribe.

Few and emphatic were the commands given to him. He listened in silence and then noiselessly stole away.

How he did his deadly work with the mysterious poisons which those old fellows had the secret of making I know not. But this I do know, that one day the chief came to my house and casually remarked that there was a dead man lying out in a wigwam all by himself, and as I was anxious that all the dead should be

buried perhaps I had better go and see about the burying of that one.

I went and found a corpse already turning black under the effects of the terrible poison. As I examined it I found it was the body of Koostawin.

From that time on, for years, I never heard even a suspicion of any Indian's traps being robbed. Stern justice had effectually done its work.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

The Indian's Future and the White Man's Duty

Early missions among the Indians. Why their success has been so limited. The Christianity and civilization that prevail. Their future destiny. Absorption into the great national life. The imperative duty of the white man,



XXIII

THE recital of missionary work among the Indians since Oliver Cromwell gave his subscription "for the propagation of the gospel among the aboriginal races of America" forms one of the most interesting and romantic, and yet one of the most humiliating and unsatisfactory chapters in the history of missions.

From the first century after the discovery of this continent, the aboriginal races of America, the Indians, have been to a more or less extent the object of missionary efforts. The Spaniards began their missionary work in Florida in 1566, in New Mexico in 1597, and in California in 1697. John Eliot's great work among the Indians of New England began in 1646. The Roman Catholic missions in Canada began about 1613, although Paul LaJeune, the first Jesuit leader, did not reach the New World until 1632, when that Order supplanted the Recollet Fathers who had already begun the work.

Of the zeal and devotion of those early missionaries, it is not our purpose here to write.

Suffice to say that both among Catholic and Protestant missions, the wide world over, there have been given no greater zeal and devotion to the work ; there have been no greater sacrifices made, no more persistent efforts put forth, both to Christianize and to civilize savages, than have been witnessed in the work amongst the American Indians. And yet we have to admit that, considering all the lives that have been sacrificed, the sufferings and hardships involved and the vast expense incurred, the results that are seen do not compare favorably with what may be seen in many other mission fields. Humiliating as this may be, there are reasons to account for it. The vastness of the country, the sparseness of the population, the lack of assimilation among many tribes, the hostility and inbred contempt they had for each other, as well as the multiplicity and variety of their languages, and their migratory lives, were all antagonistic to missionary success and detrimental to the establishment of settled civilized communities amongst them. Then there was that marked unsusceptibility, if not repugnance, of the red Indian, to the customs and habits of civilized life. His aversion to change a life which seemed to him sufficient, and the enjoyment and excitement of which was satisfying and congenial

to his proud, independent spirit, was very great. Indians have never, without reluctance, accepted the white man's civilization. This can hardly be wondered at, when we remember that the phases of it which were first presented to them were not of a very high type. The "palefaces" whom the Indians generally first met, were loaded down with "fire-water" and a greed for gain. By them the Indians were first made drunk and then swindled and robbed, first of their furs and then of their lands. Is it any wonder that when they "came to themselves," they were chary about accepting such a civilization?

The Indians, as distinct nationalities, are dying out; the remnants of the great tribes are rapidly becoming absorbed in the national life of the dominant white man. This is so evident that there is but little prospect of any considerable number of Indians long remaining in distinctly religious communities, except, as in the far north, where there is nothing to cause white men in large numbers to settle among or around them.

With their acquisition of the English language and their instruction in religious and secular knowledge, it will soon be better for them and for the national life of the country,

that they be placed on the footing of all other citizens. There are now no reasons why they should be treated as a distinct people.

A nation that has lost its heart is doomed. The Indians have now no national aspirations. No Tecumseh, with his dreams of a great Indian confederacy, will ever again arise. The thoughtful Indian now sees that his only chance of happiness and promotion is to go on the white man's trail. To help him on that trail, to see that all monies due him for land surrendered in the past, and all that may be his right, by treaties made, shall be paid him in a way that will be to his advantage, is a sacred trust that must be honestly carried out.

To help him to become a worthy citizen of the land, as conditions now are, is our duty. His past is shrouded in gloom and disaster. Let us light up for him and his children, a future; one equal to that which we offer to the immigrant from foreign lands, and similar to that which we desire for ourselves.

And yet we must not go too fast, or be easily discouraged at the difficulties. It has taken the white man long centuries to reach the position he now occupies, so let us be patient with the Indian and his tardy acceptance of our civilization. The ultimate absorption is sure to come,

but before that day arrives, there is much for us to do. Our Indian missions must be well sustained and the schools must be efficiently equipped. The churches and governments interested must coöperate, and, thus being looked after, the civilization of the red man will be accomplished. Then, and only then, to the remnants of the once great peoples that lived on the American continent, there will, in a measure, be repaid the heavy debt we are under to a noble but unfortunate race, who in the past have suffered so largely at our hands.

